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a novel by

Alan R. Trustman and James R. Webb

based on their original screenplay

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THEY CALL ME MISTER TIBBS!

Alan Trustman
& James R. Webb

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Based on characters by
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“You’re pretty sure of yourself, ain’t you Virgil? Virgil, that’s a funny name for a nigger boy that comes from Philadelphia. What do they call you up there?”

“They call me Mister Tibbs!”

—*In the Heat of the Night* (1967)

1

The lights of the city at twilight were a mask, a twinkling distraction so people could forget for a moment the grinding maw that threatened all the time to destroy them. At work, at play, at home in bed, reality was held at arm's length to keep the wolf at the door on the outside—always on the outside. Because after sunset, the night people came out.

Street sweepers and police cars cruised the darkened streets where danger hid from the light. Bodies froze momentarily as headlights washed over sidewalks, then appeared from doorways when the police car had passed. Dirt and debris swirled in the gutters as the street sweeper followed in its wake.

Taxis crisscrossed the city taking passengers home to hide, or picking up others who had unconsciously chosen to challenge the night. A cable cars made their way down a steep hills, past taverns and nightclubs, movie houses and corner bodegas, restaurants and laundromats, darkened government buildings, and dimly-lit high-rise apartments.

In Joy Sturges's apartment psychedelic lights pulsed in time with the music on the stereo, changing colors as they ebbed and flowed across a slender bronze statue on the coffee table standing next to

a half-consumed highball in a ruby-colored glass. Heavy breathing competed with the jazz on the stereo.

Joy Sturgis stared at the ceiling, emotionless, lying back on the couch while she looked over a man's naked shoulder, lights of green, then rose, then yellow, the only movement on her face. Then the breathing changed and so did the blank vacancy in her eyes, to something like shame. As the breathing increased, so did Joy's irritation, until finally she'd had enough and pushed the man to the floor, spilling the highball and causing the statue to wobble.

"Stop!" she yelled, standing up from the couch. "For God's sake stop it. I can't even fake it any more. Get out, will you? Get out!"

A small pendant on a thin gold chain gleamed at her throat. Still shaking her head, Joy pulled her Oriental robe from the floor and shoved her arms into the loose sleeves to cover her nakedness, denying him the sight of her body any further.

The man just stared up at her from the floor.

"What the hell are you waiting for?" she shouted. She couldn't help it now—the damn had finally burst. "I don't need you and your lousy hangups. I had it better this afternoon over there on the rug. I never needed you—so get out—get the hell out and take this with you!"

Joy suddenly ripped the pendant and chain from her neck, and threw it in his face.

Then he finally stood, and Joy instinctively seemed to shrink from him. He looked at her a few seconds, then approached her, deliberate, focused. She stepped back, unsure.

"What's the matter with you?" a little quieter now, more measured. "Take that lousy thing with you, you lousy son of a bitch—"

His hands shot out to grasp her neck, so quickly that it startled her for a second and she forgot to be scared. He'd done this before, always during sex, but it never hurt. This time was different.

As she tried to get away, his grip grew tighter and that sent her into a panic. She struggled to breathe, and her arms automatically

came up, the flowing sleeves of the robe beating like bird wings against his arms, and just as ineffective. At last she managed to pull loose and run toward the front door, the cold of the spilled highball on her bare feet nearly making her scream. Her robe had come untied, and it only emphasized her nudity rather than concealed it.

But his hand reached out again and caught her hair before she could go more than a few steps. This time she did scream as he pulled her to the floor, and with his other hand brought the bronze statue down on her head. He continued beating her with it, even though her movements had stopped. The statue came down again and again, crushing her broken skull even further . . . again and again . . . and again.

Nothing could protect Joy Sturges now, for the wolf was not at the door . . . it was already inside her apartment.

A loud crash from the street below filled the night air. Bottles smashed against each other as trash flowed from a small, metal can to a larger one at the curb. For good measure, Mealie Williamson made even more noise by smacking the small can against the larger one, as though there might be something lodged in the bottom. If they were going to expect him to take out their trash, they could damn well listen while he did it.

Up above, a few lights were on in the windows of the apartment building. In one, colored lights alternated while the tinkling of a piano could be heard through the open window. The janitor dragged the can back up the sidewalk as he headed for the side entrance to the building. Mealie was a thin and wiry Negro in his sixties, grizzled stubble on his jowls, balding at the crown of his head, with a small hitch in his step.

Just then the Preacher Starke stuck his head out the front door, as if he expected to catch the noisy perpetrator in the act. Mealie smiled and shook his head as he softly closed the gate behind him. It

might be ungrateful to dislike his job, but it weren't no sin to make a little racket. Then he made his way down the back alley and into the building, through the foyer past the girl at the switchboard, and began to trudge up the stairs to the third floor.

Joy Sturges's door opened slowly inward. A thirty-five-year-old man in Khaki pants and a blue dress shirt under a navy sport coat stepped out into the dimly-lit hallway—music still playing in the apartment, colored lights still flashing—and quietly pulled the door closed behind him. After wiping off the knob with a handkerchief, he fished for a pack of cigarettes in his jacket pocket. He had put one into his mouth and was looking for his lighter when he heard someone coming up the stairs, softly banging something on the carpet. He stuck the cigarette in his coat pocket and went back inside.

He looked around for a second, averting his eyes from the body of the woman, and walked quickly back to the bedroom. Pushing aside the curtains, he opened the window and looked out into the alley. No one there. Then he climbed through the open window onto the fire escape and pulled the window closed behind him.

Mealie trudged his way down the hall, a little disappointed that the plastic cans the tenants used in their apartments didn't make more noise as he dumped the contents into his own metal can. When he saw that Joy's garbage wasn't out he exhaled a heavy sigh and lightly knocked on the door. She only remembered to put her trash out about half the time.

"It's Mealie, Miss Joy."

No answer. But he could hear music coming from inside. He knocked again, a little louder, and this time the door, which hadn't been fully latched, opened a couple of inches. He could really hear the music now.

“Comin’ in, Miss Joy,” he said loudly, pushing the door open a few more inches. “Comin’ in for the trash.” Then he opened it all the way and walked inside.

The colored lights played over Mealie’s face as he squinted against them in the darkness. Then his foot hit something and he bent to pick it up. It was a small, metal statue in the figure of a woman. It was brown with smooth surfaces all over, no features on the face, and only the hint of breasts. He also noticed something dark and sticky on the base. He leaned over to set it on the coffee table when he saw the body on the floor, a blood-stained halo on the carpet beneath her head.

“Jesus . . .”

Mealie dropped the statue and turned back for the door, still gripping his can in one hand, and raced out of the apartment as fast as he could go, leaving the door open behind him.

The record finally came to an end, and the tone arm lifted and moved back to set down on its own. At the same time the flashing lights stopped, bathing the apartment in darkness. Through the open window came a sound from the street.

“Make the future now!” blared a voice from a bullhorn. “Who goes to school, your kids or the bureaucrats?”

A van with campaign slogans plastered to the sides drove slowly past the apartment building, as its strident message through the loudspeaker continued. “Yes on Four—community control of schools! They’re your kids—they’re your taxes—why shouldn’t you put the two together?”

While the sound receded as the van turned the corner, Mealie hobbled up to the fourth-floor hallway as fast as he could go, the can unconsciously banging against his leg. The landlord would know what to do. Then he reached the door he was looking for and pounded on it.

“Mr. Weedon . . . Mr. Weedon!”

When no one answered he pounded again, until finally he heard the latch and ran past Weedon into the apartment as soon as the door opened. Weedon had taken a quick shower, and was in his robe drying his hair with a towel.

"Damnit! I told you to stay out of here." Weedon didn't try to hide the contempt in his voice. "What do you want?"

"Mr. Weedon," Mealie gasped, trying to catch his breath. "That girl in 3-A, Joy Sturges—she's dead!"

"She's what?"

"Dead—and there's blood. Somebody done it, Mr. Weedon."

"Shut up! You want 'em to hear you clear across the bridge?"

Weedon closed the door and ran his fingers through his long, damp hair. He grabbed the two ends of the towel around his neck and said, "Now what the hell are you talking about?"

Mealie gestured toward the floor with his can. "I went in there like I always do when she forgets to put the trash out—music goin'—rainbow light gizmo goin'—I think it happened just now—"

"You see anybody?"

"No."

"You sure? Think now. Think!"

"I am, Mr. Weedon, I am."

"There's people comin' in an' out all the time. You must have seen somebody."

Mealie was already shaking his head. "Nobody. Nobody . . . 'cept . . ."

"Who?"

"Mr. Sharpe. Otherwise not a soul."

"Sharpe? Logan Sharpe? When?"

"Before sundown—maybe fifteen minutes ago—maybe a little more. But he visit Miss Joy often. You know, he always spreadin' the word."

"He see you?"

"No. Now, Mr. Weedon, don't you go suspicionin' Mr. Sharpe. He was just lookin' out the front door to see what all the racket was."

"Listen to me. I've never had any trouble in this building, and now we're going to have the police all over the place."

Mealie's countenance turned cloudy. "Well, I don't like talkin' to no police, neither."

"Good. Don't tell 'em you were in there—don't tell them anything!"

"I don't gotta tell 'em I saw Mr. Sharpe?"

"Nothing, I said! All you know is the inside of a trash can, hear?"

Weedon stroked his carefully trimmed mustache while Mealie nodded. Then he went back in the bedroom and came out a few seconds later with a twenty-dollar bill. "You're okay, Mealie. Now get back to work. And remember, don't say anything. Leave everything to me."

But Mealie could only stare at the twenty in his hand, as Weedon opened the door and practically had to shove him out.

"Mighty kind of you, Mr. Weedon—"

The closing door cut off anything further, as Weedon looked over at the telephone.

The light on the beige telephone glowed red and flashed as Captain Henry Marden set down a delicate white China cup and saucer on his desk. The open door of the office had "Chief of Homicide" stenciled on the frosted window. Marden eased the phone off the cradle and yawned at his new, almost lush, carpeted office. Dressed in a blue, three-piece suit with a red tie, the captain was sixty-five, hard yet fatherly, and bored. He'd worked his entire career for this, and yet he wasn't convinced this was what he really wanted after all. *Be careful what you wish for* . . . Finally, he picked up the phone.

“Marden . . .” he said into the handset, and listened for a second. “All right, put him through.”

The voice at the other end seemed bursting with excitement. “Logan done it. It was Logan!”

“Who?”

“Logan Sharpe. He killed a girl . . .”

Marden suddenly sat up a little straighter in his chair. “He did what? Who is this? What’s your name?”

Laughter on the other end of the phone actually caused Marden to pull the receiver away from his ear and look at it for a second.

“110 St. James, apartment 3-A. You got that? You write that down?”

“Hold it—let me get my pencil.”

Marden pressed the hold button and glanced out at his secretary, who was already looking back into his office. “Get this traced if you can.” He punched the button and said, “Okay, what’d you say your name was again?”

“Don’t get cute. She was *his* girl—and we saw him runnin’ out, I’m telling you.”

Marden’s eyes narrowed as the phone clicked off in his ear. He slammed the receiver down just a little too hard and was on his feet a second later heading for the door, moving quickly for a man of his size.

In a darkened office in another part of the homicide squad, Lieutenant Virgil Tibbs was at his own desk, also on the phone. But his posture was much more relaxed. A black detective in his mid-thirties, he was in shirtsleeves and a tie, leaning on his elbow, his voice soft and rich. The office was half the size of Marden’s but similarly accoutered, though a bit more spartan and utilitarian.

“Not long,” he said into the receiver, as a slight smile crossed his lips. “A little while.”

On the other end of the phone was Valerie Tibbs, a strikingly beautiful woman. Her bright eyes flashed as she smiled herself. At age twenty-nine she had lost none of her youthful beauty, smooth skin and silky black hair. In the kitchen of her two-story Victorian home, she was leaning against the door frame at the entrance to the family room, holding the receiver of a wall telephone. Her voice was somewhere between teasing and tart.

"It *is* after six, and you *do* have a family."

"A family? What's that?"

"Anything special you'd like to eat?"

Tibbs grinned again. "Something light—a beer. That's all"

"Let's go hear Logan after dinner. I'll get a sitter . . . okay?"

"On a Friday?"

"I think it has something to do with the election. There are supposed to be TV reporters there any everything."

"Ah." The thought of it enervated Tibbs. "Not tonight, honey—I'm beat." Tibbs expected a response, but didn't get one. "You hear me?"

"Yeah—I heard you. You're beat."

"Now you're mad."

"No. I'm not. Don't be too late."

He grunted assent as Valerie hung up.

She was still the same preacher's daughter he'd met in college and fell in love with a dozen years ago. And he wouldn't have had it any other way. Tibbs held the receiver in his hands for a few long seconds just thinking about her. Then something snapped him out of his reverie, a noise or a feeling . . .

Suddenly Marden and Lieutenant Herbert Kenner walked through the door as Tibbs set the receiver on the cradle. Kenner was about fifty, with a short-cropped mustache, intelligent eyes, and a high forehead made even more so by the fact he was going bald on top. Tibbs had been partnered with him when he first arrived in San Francisco, but since making lieutenant they generally worked sepa-

rately. On high-profile cases, however, Marden liked to pool his talent.

"Virgil, something's up," said Marden. "I think you better go with Herb and have a look. Do you mind?"

Tibbs' expression hadn't changed in the slightest. "What if I said I did?"

"It's your pal, Logan Sharpe. He may be in a jam."

Tibbs was on his feet before the captain had finished. He snatched his jacket from the back of the chair, and Marden moved aside as he and Kenner quick-stepped past him.

Flashbulbs exploded in Joy's apartment while several men busily made their way around the crime scene, dusting for prints, taking measurements, and of course photographing every aspect of the homicide.

"That does it, sir," said the photographer to Tibbs.

Tibbs and Kenner were still studying the body on the floor, and Tibbs looked up with irritation. "Not yet. Roll her over. Then under the body."

Two uniformed officers gently lifted the body and turned it over. More flashbulbs popped as the photographer sheepishly took more pictures.

"Okay," Tibbs said, "*now* you're finished. Out!"

As he gestured toward the door, the photographer made a hasty exit past Officer Stanley Pierce, an alert black patrolman, at the moment keeping a small clique of technicians and detectives outside the door, their hands ostentatiously in their pockets. The fingerprint men, without even looking at the detectives, went about finishing their business quietly and efficiently before the rest of the crime scene technicians entered.

Tibbs turned to the closest one as the man gently lifted a piece of tape off of a bronze statue, bloodied and lying on the floor. "Anything?"

The oldest of the three technicians grinned from above the statue as he sprayed it once again with powder. "Too good to be true."

"All right," said Tibbs, anything but happy. "Hurry it up."

The technician now looked into his eyes and said, without emotion, "It takes as long as it takes, Lieutenant."

Tibbs nodded. "Okay."

Then he turned toward the door. "Stanley?"

"Nobody's been in or out except the crime scene guys, once we got here."

"Who's been questioned?"

"Everybody on this floor and the one above. Carter and Levy are working the first two floors now. The girl at the switchboard didn't see anything."

"Anybody kind enough to be walking around spattered with blood?"

Pierce couldn't hold back a grin. "Not yet."

"How about the fire escape?"

"No." Then he nodded toward the fingerprint men. "Nobody's been in the bedroom but these guys."

"Now's probably a good time to start."

Pierce nodded and gave the okay for the rest of the crew to enter the apartment. Since the basic work of fixing the crime scene had been done, it was time to collect carpet fibers, check inside cupboards and closets, and look at the entire scene as a whole. Two men went immediately to the girl's body, and after a few minutes Tibbs joined the medical examiner and his assistant in a crouch.

"Anything?"

Doctor Harvey Paul was in his mid-fifties, gray at the temples and sporting heavily framed glasses. His hair was sparse, and topped a thin, ruddy face. He shrugged at the question without looking up.

“Too much, really. There’s the obvious trauma to the head, but it also looks as if she was strangled. Then we have to check for rape . . . It’ll take the autopsy to sort all of this out.”

“How about the time of death?”

Paul shrugged again.

“Come on, Doc. Best guess.”

“You know me—I never guess . . . except in a court of law.”

“The lights in the apartment were off. Would you put it before dark?”

“I thought you heard me the first time.”

That launched Tibbs back to his feet and he looked around the room, impatient, as the technicians continued to work. Men with tweezers were pulling hairs from the sofa, others were measuring fragments of broken glass and the broken lamp with calipers, before gently placing them in plastic bags.

Then Tibbs’ partner thumbed his walkie-talkie. “Weiss?”

“Yeah,” came the distorted voice over the radio.

“This is Kenner. Have you found Logan Sharpe yet?”

“He’s home. Been here since about seven-fifteen. He has witnesses.”

Kenner looked over at Tibbs, but the lieutenant was staring at the phone on the end table.

“Who made that phone call?” said Tibbs. “That’s what I want to know.”

Dr. Paul turned and pushed his glasses up with a gloved hand. “Don’t you and Sharpe sit in the same pew, so to speak? Maybe you ought to sit this one out?”

When Tibbs didn’t answer, Paul shook his head and turned back to the body.

A fat detective on his knees was happily going over what looked like a new rug, scooping fluffy beige lint into a plastic bag.

“Make sure and test it out,” said Tibbs, catching the fat man’s attention and receiving a nod.

Two other techs working on a chalked off area of the rug looked up momentarily, then went back to scraping something off the rug into a test tube using a knife and tweezers. “Looks like semen,” said one of them, loud enough so Tibbs could hear.

A fourth tech held up one of the sofa cushions to the light. “Here, too, I think it is.”

Tibbs walked back into the bedroom where two more men were working. The bedsheets had been stripped back and one of them was holding them by the edges. His companion was working on a spot with a knife and a small pair of forceps.

“Run an acid phosphatase,” said Tibbs.

“There’s semen on the bedcover, too.”

Tibbs looked down at the mattress and nodded, then made his way back to the front room just as Kenner was saying, “Joy, little girl, you had a busy day.”

Tibbs looked around the room for what felt like the hundredth time. Finally he sat down on an ottoman near the phone and internally sighed. He was doing it again, micromanaging the situation. These guys were pros, and no doubt didn’t appreciate him looking over their shoulders and stating the obvious. But it was the way he had worked himself up to detective, and sometimes he lapsed back into the same behavior. Unfortunately, where before it had tagged him as a comer, now that he had arrived it just made him look unsure of himself. It was pretty clear that Logan was the cause for his backsliding.

Valerie had warmed to Sharpe as soon as they moved to San Francisco. He’d done more for the community in the nearly two decades Tibbs had known him than any dozen politicians. Tibbs hadn’t lived here the whole time, of course, but since his return he found his social life increasingly began to revolve around the church in a way it hadn’t in Philadelphia. Back east Valerie’s participation at her father’s church had been an obligation; here it was a personal mission.

He wanted the phone call to Marden to be a prank, because it made no sense—except politically—to embroil Reverand Sharpe in a murder investigation. Which made it even more important that Tibbs investigate the case thoroughly. There couldn't be any loose ends or sloppy work on this one. If the evidence ultimately did point to Logan, it needed to be airtight, beyond a shadow of a doubt. But he tried not to entertain that possibility as he looked around the apartment again, because the anger it stirred in him threatened to compromise his objectivity.

There were books on the end table next to him, and more on the shelves. Two detectives in the kitchen had already gathered their things together and were heading for the door, which immediately caught his attention and brought him to his feet. "Where do you think you're going?" he said.

One of them, deadpan, responded, "To join the union."

Tibbs ignored the jibe. "On your way out check the hallway . . . and the roof, too."

Meanwhile, Kenner had picked up one of the books on the table and read the title. "*The Church in the Modern World* . . . this broad?" Then he opened it to the flyleaf and his eyes widened as he flashed the page at Tibbs. "Belongs to Logan Sharpe . . ."

2

At evening church service Reverend Logan Sharpe was in full evangelical mode. His icy blue eyes pierced the parishioners with his steely gaze, while his hands gesticulated pointedly to effect. The pastor was in his late thirties, firm jawed, with full lips, thick eyebrows, a high forehead and thinning brown hair. He spoke from the pulpit at the front of the sanctuary, while to his right sat a young black man, Freddie, playing an almost subliminal organ that swelled and subsided with every word Sharpe uttered. Sharpe's voice radiated sincerity and concern throughout the church.

". . . for what is man that Thou are mindful of him? Thou hast put all things under his feet. Sheep and oxen, all of them. The foul of the air and the fish of the sea."

He took a dramatic pause and then, almost saddened, said, "But man has polluted the air, and rotted the cities." Sharpe's words caused a stir in the crowd. The nave was completely packed. About half of the worshipers were black.

Halfway down on the aisle sat Tibbs, Kenner, and Weiss in plainclothes. Kenner was visibly amused, as though the whole thing was a joke. Tibbs could barely suppress the pained expression on his own face over why he was there.

He'd spent more Sundays in this building than he could remember. The place was old, older than he was, certainly, but there was still an air of the sacred that exuded from the walls. It had been lovingly cared for over the decades, inside and out. The exterior had just been repainted recently, and Tibbs fondly remembered back to August days in the heat with a paintbrush. The inside had been painted white, with windows lining walls that narrowed toward the sanctuary. Behind the pulpit hung a large, tasteful wooden cross, framed on each side by long, narrow stained-glass windows. And overhead loomed a dark, Gothic, wood-buttressed ceiling. But the beauty of the surroundings made the ugliness of Tibbs' presence on this particular night an even greater contrast.

"And what are we doing about it? Where are we spending our money? Suppose all our children go to brand-new five-million-dollar schools. What do they learn from teachers who can't speak their language? Teachers who would rather be somewhere else? Teachers who are responsible to someone else?"

As Tibbs looked over the congregants, most of them were hanging on Sharpe's every word. He noted several people from his own neighborhood in their Sunday best, leaning forward in the pews. The people nodded in agreement, and murmured encouragement now and then. Soon Weiss began to pick up on Kenner's amusement and it was all Tibbs could do not to tell them both to knock it off. Even worse, there were cameras everywhere, televising the sermon, and speakers outside broadcasting Sharpe's words to the overflow audience in the street. The whole scene pained him. Valerie had wanted to go to church tonight, but Tibbs was glad she didn't have to see this.

"People have accused me of being a political preacher. People have warned you against listening to me. But what does the word politics mean? It comes from the Greek meaning 'of the citizen.' And what is a citizen but a human being? And if human beings and their welfare are not the province of one of God's ministers, what is?"

Another murmur spread through the congregation, and even the two detectives next to Tibbs were grudgingly forced to nod.

"Right next door to this building, people labor for the success of Proposition Four—some are at it right now instead of sitting here listening to me. I don't call it flattering, but neither do I call it ungodly."

Chuckles flitted through the congregation.

"We are right down to the wire. The next few days will mean success or failure. I don't deny that Proposition Four is just a beginning —a foot in the door. Eventually we want genuine Home Rule in many areas other than schools. We think we deserve it—we know we deserve it—we have proven it. Cities breed slums, and we live in a poor district, a district filled with people of different color, different race, yet thanks to our efforts and our own pride—our own paintbrushes, if you will—we are not a slum. But how long must we be expected to paint our landlord's house when our landlord admits no responsibility to us? My brothers and sisters . . . no one will do anything for us except ourselves."

Now the murmurs were tinged with anger, and Sharpe held up his hands.

"Anger won't do it . . . votes will. Now, let us pray."

Heads wend down throughout the congregation, even those of the two detectives. The only head that didn't bow was Tibbs'.

"Lord, teach us to love ourselves, so that *we* can love. Teach us to respect ourselves so others will respect us. Let us not confirm the fears of those who fear us . . . Dear Lord, give us this, our first victory. Amen."

Freddie's music began to swell, introductory notes that had people reaching for the hymn books in the pockets of the pews in front of them. Sharpe and Freddie had apparently done this many times, as they knew just how long to wait before Sharpe began leading them in song. The congregation then joined in singing "Lead On, Oh King Eternal."

Tibbs stood up and the other two detectives followed him to the back of the nave. There he turned and looked back, and Sharpe's eyes met his. Then the three policemen headed down the stairs and out the front door, through the throngs of people outside who were singing along with those still in the church. Tibbs wanted to get out before the congregation began its exodus.

As they made their way to the rectory next door Tibbs stopped in front of a uniformed patrol sergeant who appeared fairly relaxed.

"Looks like you're going to have an easy night."

"So far so good," the sergeant said. "Hope it stays this quiet after the votes are counted."

The lower floor of the rectory had been turned into the campaign headquarters for Proposition 4. The room was full of makeshift furniture and file cabinets. A pool table at one end was piled with posters and fliers. Metal lockers ran along one wall. Meanwhile two typewriters busily clacked out vital communications, while several people maned the telephones. Several campaign workers, male and female, white, black, yellow—not all of them young—were busy doing other vital tasks. Tibbs and the two detectives sat down on folding chairs to wait for Sharpe. The singing from outside could still be heard.

Kenner said, "How long you know him?"

"The sergeant?" Tibbs answered.

The lids over Kenner's hard eyes lowered slightly. "You know who I mean."

Tibbs remained stone-faced. "Eighteen years."

At a beat-up banquet table an Asian man on the phone was saying, "If it's your relief money, Mrs. Morgan, we don't want it. How's about putting up a few posters—it'll take the kinks out of your rheumatism . . . Okay!"

At the other end of the table a black man said into his phone, "Five bucks! Where did you swipe it? No—don't waste a stamp—we'll send our private armored car over for five bucks. Ten minutes." Turning to a boy with long hair and jeans torn at the knees as he hung

up the phone, “Hey, armored car, haul ass over to 1624 O’Brien. The name’s Fong—Ben Fong. And make sure you come back with it.”

The kid slouched out the door without even acknowledging the insult. An older blonde woman then took the phone from the Asian man and looked over at the cops.

“I have to call my husband every hour or he’ll think I’m walking the streets. Oh, how I wish I believed that.”

Kenner and Weiss allowed themselves to be amused, but Tibbs’ face remained a mask.

Two men walked past with armfuls of posters as Kenner looked down at the small plate riveted to the front of the chair on which he was sitting.

“Silver’s Mortuary—I guess all the establishment isn’t against this campaign.”

“Okay,” said Tibbs without moving his head, “so they’ll get my business.” At last the singing stopped, and Tibbs glanced at his watch.

A few minutes later Sharpe and Freddie entered at the far end of the room, their vestments over their arms. Tibbs watched them intently.

“Did you see all those people?” Freddie said. “We’re going to win this fight—I can feel it.”

Sharpe grinned. “And you think school will be easier then?”

“Man, it better be . . . When I take to do-goodin’ I like to do good where it helps.”

Tibbs watched as the two hung their vestments in lockers at the end of the row. Sharpe patted Freddie on the back and then headed over to where the policemen were setting. Tibbs stood and the others followed.

“Virge,” said Sharpe, spreading his hands out, palms upwards. “I was afraid I was becoming too controversial, but this . . . How are you?”

“Okay. Nice sermon, Logan.”

“Where’s Valerie?”

Tibbs ignored the question. "This is Lieutenant Kenner, homicide, Sergeant Weiss, homicide. The Reverand Logan Sharpe."

"Pleased to meet you fellows . . . What's the occasion?"

Tibbs couldn't even force himself to sugar-coat it. "Joy," he said bluntly.

"Joy?" The reverend looked confused for a moment. "Joy Sturges?"

Tibbs looked around and said, "Is there someplace else we could talk?"

"Sure . . . we can go up to my rooms. This way. Homicide?"

Tibbs' gaze never left Sharpe as they followed him up the stairs. His surprise and concern seemed genuine.

Behind them on them on the phone the Asian was saying, "You know we can't afford TV spots, Charlie. Do something to get the coverage for free—like maybe stand on top of your head on a cable car or something . . ."

Tibbs watched Sharpe as he looked around at the three detectives in his room. Kenner and Weiss were clearly waiting for Tibbs to take the lead, but he let them wait. Finally, Sharpe said, "Has something happened to Joy?"

Tibbs walked over to the open door of Sharpe's bedroom and looked inside. Kenner answered the question.

"She was found dead tonight. Killed."

Sharpe sat down on the arm of a big overstuffed chair. "How? How did it happen?"

"Messy," Tibbs said into the bedroom, then turned around. "Logan, I think you'd better call a lawyer. Now."

It took a moment for the suggestion to sink in. "What for?" he asked, deep concern still registering on his face.

When Tibbs didn't answer, Kenner chimed in again. "I think it would be a good idea if we looked at his shoes . . . don't you?"

Without taking his eyes from Sharpe, Tibbs said, "You mind?"

"Of course not." Sharpe immediately pulled the laces on one shoe and handed it to Kenner, then did the same with the other. "There are two other pair in the closet in the bedroom."

Tibbs nodded almost imperceptibly and Sharpe stood and walked into the room to retrieve them. The three detectives followed. When he had handed them to Kenner, the two detectives examined the shoes for a minute and tried to show the soles to Tibbs, but he ignored them. To Sharpe he said, "We're also going to need all the clothes in the closet. Put them on the bed, please, Logan."

Some reluctance began to creep into Sharpe's bearing and, after a brief pause, he stepped in and pulled a modest collection of clothing from off the rod in the closet and laid it down on the bed. Tibbs took a perfunctory look at the cuffs and flipped over the jacket on top. Then he shifted his gaze to Sharpe's face and the look of innocence there was too much.

"Damn it, Logan. Someone *saw* you leaving her building. He phoned us."

"Who?"

Tibbs turned away and looked out into the main room. "We don't know."

"Someone must be trying to discredit the campaign by involving me!"

Tibbs allowed the pent-up anger to dissipate. "Yeah . . . that's a possibility," he said, and turned back to Sharpe. "Logan, tell me . . . what was Joy to you? She had no job. Those apartments rent for three hundred a month. And the furnishings? Have you seen her new rug? It must have cost two hundred dollars."

"I've seen it," Sharpe said.

Kenner weighed in. "Then you were there today?"

"Why do you say that?"

"Because she only got it yesterday."

"I could have seen it yesterday."

"Did you?" said Tibbs.

He could see the reluctance to lie in Sharpe's face. "No. I was there today, Virge."

"When?"

"Four-thirty or so this afternoon."

Kenner raised his eyebrows at Tibbs, but when he didn't get a response, said cuttingly, "Just making your parish rounds, I suppose."

"I'm telling you again," said Tibbs, "you don't have to say anything without a lawyer."

"I don't want a lawyer. I don't *need* a lawyer. I'm happy to answer any of your questions. I knew Joy . . . knew her well. I tried to help her, like so many others. I loaned her books . . . I even tried to get her to go back to her family."

Tibbs' long pause caused Sharpe to look to the other detectives. But they were suddenly very interested in the shoes in their hands. Tibbs said, "We'll want those clothes you have on, too."

Sharpe was visibly taken aback, but started stripping off his jacket, then removed his tie, and began unbuttoning his shirt. As he was dropping his trousers Tibbs said, "Where did you go after you left her apartment?"

"I made some more visits. The Greens and the Bakers weren't home, but I saw Mrs. Battaglia." Still in his underwear, Sharpe took down a yellow robe from the hook on the closet door, but before putting it on he said, "I assume I can still keep this?"

Tibbs nodded. "What time did you see Mrs. Battaglia?"

"I don't recall exactly. She was cooking dinner."

"Okay, Logan. We want your permission to take these clothes to the lab and check for bloodspots. They'll be returned before morning."

Sharpe nodded vigorously. "Go ahead. I want to do some work for an interview, anyway."

Tibbs nodded at Kenner and Weiss, who picked up the clothing from the bed. Tibbs observed Sharpe watching the two men leave

with his clothes. He hated having to do this, but there was really no other choice. Once they had left the room, Sharpe turned and said, "What do you think, Virge?"

"You haven't a real alibi. That means we'll have to do a lot of poking around."

Sharpe looked out toward the front room and then lowered his voice. "Virge, I want to tell you the whole truth, but I wanted them to leave first."

Tibbs was already shaking his head. "Un, uh. Don't ask me to keep secrets. What you tell me, the department is going to know."

Sharpe was taken aback, but only for a moment. "My visits to Joy started the way I said, but for the last couple of months . . . I've been sleeping with her."

Tibbs was thinking of the sofa in her apartment, the stains on the rug and the bed. He was about to mention this but stopped himself. He tried not to let Sharpe see the pity in his eyes.

"And this visit today . . . ?"

Sharpe nodded.

"Logan, if you were paying her rent, or anything else, it's going to come out."

Sharpe was already shaking his head. "I wasn't. I never gave her a cent. She wouldn't take anything from me."

"No gifts?"

"Loans . . . some books . . . but no gifts."

"Girls like that talk a lot—she could have told somebody about you."

"I suppose it's possible, but I don't think so. She knew how important my work was."

Grudgingly Tibbs nodded. "All right. I'll sit on it for a while. Anything else we're going to find?"

"No," he said, his shoulders visibly relaxing. "But I feel better having told you. I thought I could change her, Virge. I really believe

I was beginning to." He shrugged. "Maybe that's why this happened . . ."

Tibbs headed out to the front room. The other two detectives had already left. He rubbed his chin and could tell he needed a shave. When he reached the door he turned back, and the pathetic look on Sharpe's face actually caused him to let out a single bark of laughter. Still grinning, he said, "Damnit, Logan. Why the hell couldn't you have stuck to visiting old ladies?

3

As soon as Tibbs entered the house, he was assaulted by the piercing sound of rock music coming from the television set. Climbing the stairs it only seemed to get louder. Then he reached the living room and could see his seven-year-old son Andy, in his pajamas, holding a guitar and watching a soul band stomp and moan, the distorted guitar nearly causing Tibbs to wince.

A fire was crackling in the fireplace, while rain dripped from the window panes. On the other side of the room Valerie was curled up in a comfortable leather chair reading a book. A smile on her face, she chuckled at the book, then turned a page.

Tibbs removed his coat and hung it in the closet, then stopped at the entrance to the kitchen and looked back into the living room. Finally, Valerie looked up from her book and smiled at him. Her smile was blinding. So much so that he had to walk across the room, bend down, and kiss her. She kissed him back.

"It's in the refrigerator."

Tibbs nodded, knowing she meant his dinner. Valerie went back to her book, but on the way to the kitchen Tibbs walked over to the TV set and turned down the volume.

"What did you do that for?" Andy whined.

"It's too loud."

Andy went back to watching the band and Tibbs said, "What did you do today?"

"Nothing. I just fooled around."

"I'll bet. Did you do any homework, or have you spent the whole afternoon watching television and playing that guitar?"

"Oh, Dad!"

That was not the response Tibbs had hoped for. For some reason he had yet to figure out, his son was immune to shame. "Why don't you ever do anything? Read a book or do something useful."

But Andy, lost in the program, did not respond.

Tibbs had had enough, and roughly pulled Andy to his feet. "Do you hear me talking to you? Get off your butt and listen when I'm talking to you."

That caused Valerie to put down her book and give Tibbs a questioning look. But she didn't interfere.

Andy suddenly looked confused. "What did you say, Dad?"

Tibbs could only look at him, the anger already ebbed away. He rubbed his son's head and repeated his criticism in a more jovial way. "I said, why don't you get off your butt and listen to me when I'm talkin' to you?" but it fell on deaf ears.

Andy went back to his show as Tibbs entered the kitchen. He opened the refrigerator door and took out a plate with two sandwiches on it, along with a bottle of Guinness. After opening the bottle crisply, he took a pull and rotated his tensed-up shoulders, then turned back toward the family room.

Tibbs looked for a moment at his wife, who had gone back to reading, then settled himself on the couch. He took another sip of the bottle and lifted the plastic wrap from off the plate. Taking a bite of sandwich, he chewed contentedly, then took another sip of beer.

Valerie put her book down and stretched, arching her back while her breasts pulled her sweater taut. Tibbs' eyes narrowed slightly, and he took another bite of sandwich. Valerie set the book on the arm of the chair and went over to sit next to Tibbs.

"Did you have a nice day at the office?"

And with that, everything that had happened that evening seemed to slough away into unimportance as he put an arm around his wife and pulled her close.

When Tibbs walked into Ginger's bedroom later he couldn't believe that all the lights were still on. She was fast asleep, of course, half uncovered, and Tibbs turned out the overhead light at the switch, then the lamp by her bedside before going over and pulling the sheets up over her shoulder.

As he sat down at the foot of the bed the only light in the room now streamed in from the hallway, and Tibbs watched the blankets rise and fall as she breathed slowly in her sleep. Then he reached over and stroked her leg.

He didn't know how long he'd been sitting there before he felt Valerie's hands on his shoulders. Tibbs put his hands on hers and pulled her down toward him and turned his head to kiss her. Twisting, he pulled her around in front of him and buried his head in her bosom, relaxing as she rubbed her hands over his back.

"She's been having some problems in her gym class," Valerie said in a soft whisper. "Maybe you can help her."

Tibbs grunted, then chuckled. Finally, he stood up and took his wife full in his arms. His kissed her again, this time with more than just domestic bliss. She seemed to sense his hunger and returned it. One hand slipped down and began unbuttoning her sweater. Her eyes were closed and she didn't resist. But once the sweater was open, Valerie whispered, "Andy."

As his hand reached inside, he said, "He's watching television."

They kissed again, and this time Tibbs removed her sweater. Valerie stepped back and looked at him for a long moment, then picked up her sweater and trailed it behind her as she left the room.

* * *

That night Tibbs lay with his hands behind his head looking up at the bedroom ceiling, lost in thought. One of Valerie's hands moved slowly over his naked chest while she watched him from her pillow.

"What is it?" she finally said.

Tibbs smiled bitterly. "Trouble. Logan Sharpe."

Valerie laughed. "Disturbing the peace again? Or inciting to riot?"

Tibbs almost couldn't bring himself to say it, but finally he blurted out, "A girl named Joy Sturges was beaten to death tonight."

Valerie immediately raised up on one elbow, her hand holding up her head, and her glorious breasts exposed. It almost took Tibbs' breath away. As it always did.

"Logan Sharpe? No!"

Tibbs sighed. "That's what he says, too."

"You believe him, don't you?"

Tibbs looked into her eyes with sympathy, but couldn't answer.

"Virge! We've known Logan for years. And you've known him even longer."

"Yeah . . . I know. But . . ."

"But what?"

"He's no saint. He's just a man."

"But he couldn't have—"

"Anybody could have."

Valerie just looked at him, but he had nothing more to say. Then she moved over and laid her head on his chest. Tibbs' arm moved across her back and after a few minutes his eyes finally closed.

The next morning Tibbs made good on his promise to help Ginger. She was supposed to stand on her head for thirty seconds, but was having trouble staying up more than ten. Unlike her brother,

however, his five-year-old sister had so much determination it made her father proud. She flashed an upside-down smile at him from the wall of the family room.

"Keep your knees together, Ginny. Always keep your knees together."

She was doing well, until her arms began to shake and she started sliding sideways. Before Tibbs could save her, she fell on the floor with a plop. But he never had the chance to console her because she wanted to get right back at it.

"Again? Again? Let's try it!"

Ginger positioned herself on the floor and Tibbs assisted her as she flung herself up against the wall. Her skirt flopped down to her chin, but she refused to be defeated, and began keeping a running count. From the corner of his eye he saw Valerie appear at the kitchen doorway with his coffee and he said, "Okay . . . Okay . . . Good girl. Keep holding it."

Tibbs walked over and kissed his wife, then took the mug from her while Ginger counted off the seconds in the background.

He sipped his coffee for a while, lost in thought, and she said, "Are you worried about Logan?"

"A little bit."

"Thank goodness you're handling the case," she said, and Tibbs averted his gaze. "It is your case, isn't it?"

"Yes and no."

Ginger plopped down to the floor again. "I have to hold it for thirty seconds. I want my gold star."

"Do you want me to help you again?" Tibbs said, about to set down his coffee mug.

"No. I'll try again later." And with that she ran to Tibbs and threw her arms around his leg in a hug, and afterward went to the kitchen table and resumed eating a slice of toast.

Valerie put a hand on Tibbs' arm. "What does that mean?"

But suddenly Andy appeared and immediately turned on the television.

"Oh, no!" said Tibbs. "Not at seven o'clock in the morning." He walked over, mug in hand, and snapped off the set. "And damn it, you keep it off."

Andy simply shrugged and went over to strum on his guitar.

As Tibbs made his way back to the kitchen he couldn't avoid Valerie any further. "*Are you in charge* of the case?" she demanded.

"I might be. There are two schools of thought. Everybody knows we're friends—"

"Which is precisely why you should insist. He's spent his life going to bat for us—all the minorities—all the poor people."

"I know."

"My God, he's got enough enemies. What are friends for?"

"Okay . . . *okay*."

Tibbs smiled wearily, and she kissed him on the cheek. He had placated her for now. How he was going to do the same with Captain Marden was going to be another matter.

4

"*Like Hell*, you will!" said Marden.

To be honest, it was exactly what Tibbs had expected. But with Valerie in the kitchen this morning he had almost convinced himself he was being too pessimistic, that the captain would see the benefit of having his lead investigator be even more mindful of innocence until proven guilty. He wasn't angry about it, per se, but it did seem to indicate a lack of imagination. Though Tibbs didn't respond, Marden acted as though he had.

"Absolutely not."

Both Kenner and Sergeant Weiss were in the room as well. Lester Weiss was about forty-five, a little thick around the middle, with a hang-dog face and a perpetual cigarette drooping from his lower lip. His eyes were cold, but slightly weary. They had just begun to go over some of the evidence photos, Weiss projecting the slides against the bare wall in the captain's office, when Tibbs suggested that he be put in charge of the investigation. Apparently, Marden didn't agree.

Kenner tried to placate him. "Listen, Hank, it's nothing to me—"

"Then why don't you *shut up*!

The captain turned to Tibbs then, and surprised him.

"It has nothing to do with the personal thing, or whether he did it or not. We have a lot of good years invested in you, and you know damn well what I mean. The day may come when we need you for more than homicide. This city's coming apart."

Tibbs did know what he meant. Unfortunately, Tibbs still didn't know how he felt about it—or should feel about it. At the moment, however, it was all academic, unimportant in the face of this murder.

"No argument," said Tibbs. "But you need to consider this. Once the newsboys get wind of Logan Sharpe being investigated, you're going to have to book him or clear him . . . Either way, the lid blows off this thing."

Marden stared at Tibbs for a long moment, and it gave him some hope. Marden wasn't usually known for his sage deliberation. "So how the hell does you're being in charge solve that?"

"Because I only care about the case," said Tibbs. "That's the key. We need to be working the *case*, not Logan." It was a lesson Tibbs had learned the hard way, in Georgia early in his career, when he'd been so focused on a suspect that the real killer almost got away with it. "That way we catch the killer, no matter who it is, instead of trying to convict or acquit Reverand Sharpe."

Tibbs could see the wheels turning in Marden's head and knew he had him. "All right," he finally said. "But officially, Herb's in charge. That *does* have to do with the personal thing."

It was a typical chicken-shit middle ground that the top brass was known for, but Tibbs would have to keep reminding himself that it didn't mean anything, didn't really change things as far as the actual investigation was concerned. He looked over to Weiss at the projector and said, "All right, show the next slide."

But instead of turning on the projector, Weiss looked over to Kenner, who just smiled at Tibbs and said, "Carry on, Sergeant."

The slides were a rehash of everything Tibbs and Kenner had already been through at the apartment: the vestibule, the inner door, the stairs going up, the third-floor landing, Joy's apartment door, the

bedroom, the rumpled bedclothes, the marked off area on the living room rug, the sofa, and the statuette on the coffee table.

"Positive acid phosphatase," Kenner said, at one point.

"Half cells?" the captain asked.

"Positive."

"I thought so. How long before?"

"Two or three hours."

Then came the pictures of Joy: the battered skull, the soft neck, the head thrown back, the soft neck in closeup, the body on the sofa covered by the sweater, and the chalky, greenish face.

"She was strangled?" asked Marden.

"Yeah," said Kenner, "but not fatally."

"Is that what Paul said?"

"Yeah. I just got off the phone with him. The autopsy's not finished, but he's sure of it. They're being real careful with this one."

When the slide of her bashed-in head appeared on the wall, Kenner said, "*That's* the cause of death."

Many of the photos were viewed without comment, but during one series Tibbs saw something that clicked in his brain. "Go back," he said. "I want to see the neck again."

Weiss reversed the carousel until he reached the slide where the thumb marks were visible on her throat.

"No. The back of the neck."

Weiss went back another slide and Tibbs stepped closer to the image on the wall. "Right there," he said, pointing. "What's that abrasion?"

"Whatever it is," said Kenner, "it's a cinch it didn't kill her."

Tibbs ignored the comment and flipped on the lights. Then he went to the phone and dialed. "This is Lieutenant Tibbs. Let me talk to the medical examiner."

The other three continued as if Tibbs hadn't made a call.

"All right," said Kenner. "What are we gonna do now? No blood on Sharpe's clothes. Nothing in the hall or on the fire escape."

"That's not quite so," Tibbs replied, phone still pressed to his ear. "They picked up fresh prints on the bedroom window frame."

"Which we haven't been able to identify," said Kenner, "thank you very much."

"Doc," Tibbs said, now back to his phone call. "What's that scratch on the back of her neck?"

"Just what you saw in the photo, a scratch of some sort."

"Any way of telling whether it was made during the struggle?"

"Impossible to say. It could have happened at the same time, but have nothing to do with being attacked."

"*Did* it happen at the same time?"

"It was recent. That's as much as I can say right now."

Tibbs thanked Dr. Paul and hung up the phone.

"It was recent," he said, lost in thought. "That's all he could say."

"His wristwatch," Kenner said. "It could have scratched her—when he strangled her."

Tibbs nodded, still thinking. "Maybe."

Marden said, "Her money and jewelry were still there, so it couldn't have been robbery. Where does that leave us?"

Tibbs, his head almost unconsciously nodding, suddenly headed for the door.

"You didn't answer my question."

Tibbs opened the door and turned back to Marden with a smile. "Herb's in charge, remember? Ask him." Then he turned and hustled down the hall.

Marden turned to Kenner, who could only laugh.

Tibbs pulled up to the Bayview Apartments building on St. James, between North Beach and Chinatown. Climbing out of the blue Impala he use for work he saw movement over by the side of the building and recognized Mealie Williamson, the janitor, but didn't

give him any more attention. He'd found the body, but had seen nothing beforehand, he said. There was no reason not to believe him, and no one in the building had ever suspected him of anything. Several of them said they even left their doors unlocked for him on garbage day and that he locked up after he was done.

The lobby was empty as Tibbs went through, except for the girl at the switchboard. He skipped the elevator and walked up the carpeted stairs on the right-hand side of the foyer. The fire stairs were on the other side of the elevator. On the way up he kept thinking about that photo, the scratch on the back of her neck. If it happened that day, it was significant. He didn't know how, but he wouldn't be satisfied until he found out.

There were no doorways on the floors, and he simply turned left on the third-floor landing and at the first door in the hallway an Asian uniformed patrolman stood at Joy's open door.

"Lieutenant."

Tibbs nodded and went inside. He immediately headed for the bedroom, opened the jewelry case on top of her dresser and examined the contents. It held all kinds of necklaces, bracelets and rings. Looking at the clasps on the necklaces there were several different types. He rubbed them on the back of his hand, but none were overtly sharp or protruding in a way that could have caused the scratch. One of them, a thin gold chain with an opaque gemstone dangling from a gold setting did manage to produce a white mark on his dark skin, and so he kept it in hand while he shut the box and headed back into the living room.

He couldn't help but look around at the place again. He went to turn on the stereo and found the necklace still in his hand, so he slipped it into his jacket pocket.

"Now, if I were a heads-up officer," said the patrolman, "I'd ask for a receipt for that."

Tibbs narrowed his eyes. "Aren't you glad you're not?"

Tibbs started up the turntable and put the needle on the record. A jazz trio. He looked around for the sleeve, but didn't see one out. Then he turned his head as the record spun to look at the label. Tommy Flannagan. The lights from the gizmo on the coffee table flashed in time with the music. Tibbs next went over to the window and opened it, unconsciously recreating the conditions during the murder.

A gentle breeze blew in as he looked down into the alley, then stepped through the window onto the fire escape. The metal structure was attached to the wall and ran down to the bedroom window as well. Tibbs took a long time looking down into the alley. Then he found himself looking up. There was one floor above him, and after that the rooftop. He stuck his head back inside.

"Who lives right above this apartment?"

The patrolman was already nodding as he pulled out a notebook from his front blouse pocket. He flipped a few pages and read, "4-A . . . Rice Weedon, the landlord."

Tibbs climbed back inside and shut the window, then walked over to the stereo. He was about to turn it off when the patrolman said, "You can leave it on, if you don't mind."

". . . now if I was a heads-up lieutenant . . ."

The patrolman just grinned. As Tibbs walked past him out the open door he said, "Have a nice day, Lieutenant."

A whistle blew as Tibbs sat in his car at the edge of a cement playground. Sharpe was waving his arms and one of the kids handed him the football. He was dressed in slacks, sneakers, and a t-shirt under a windbreaker. The whistle dropped from his mouth, hanging from a black lanyard around his neck. "Holding!" he called, and marched the ball back and set it on the cement. Tibbs had been watching him for half an hour and finally climbed out of the front seat and made his way over to the corner of the playground.

It didn't take Sharpe long to spot him. He nodded, and after another play, when he looked over and Tibbs hadn't moved, Sharpe handed the whistle to one of the parents.

"Mario, referee for a while."

He walked over to Tibbs and said, "What are you doing down this neck of the woods?"

". . . Being a detective."

They looked at each other for a long moment before Tibbs took the necklace out of his pocket and handed it to Sharpe.

"You ever see this before?"

Sharpe fiddled with the necklace before saying, "I suppose it must have belonged to Joy, right?"

"Right."

He looked at it for several seconds and then handed it back. "I think it looks familiar," he said unconvincingly.

"The clasp is rough. It might have scratched her. Was she wearing it the last time you saw her?"

Sharpe sighed. "I never pay much attention to jewelry."

This time it was Tibbs' turn to hesitate. ". . . And yet you're wearing some."

Sharpe visibly blushed as his hand went unconsciously to his neck. "This was my mother's. You may remember having seen her wear it."

Tibbs gave the preacher a weary smile. "I don't pay much attention to jewelry, either."

He sat down next to Sharpe and sighed heavily. "Ah, hell, Logan. Sometimes I wish they could turn the whole business over to a computer."

The preacher nodded. "I feel the same way. I try to reach people, but I can't, not really. Some of the kids, maybe . . . Just maybe."

"Hell, you reach plenty of people. Just look at the support you're getting for Proposition 4."

Suddenly a kid yelled from the playground. "Hey! Reverand Sharpe! Are we being refereed or not? He gave me the elbow."

"Cool it, you guys!" Sharpe looked back to Tibbs. "Maybe I do all this because I can't reach 'em any other way. Maybe I'm not spiritual enough. I wish I had the answer." Tibbs wasn't even looking at him. "What do *you* want, Virge?"

"I don't know. I don't think anyone really knows what he wants. And I don't trust anyone who says he does."

Sharpe hesitated, then said, "Are you getting anywhere?"

"Not with the murder. I'm not even getting anywhere with myself." He pushed himself up and began walking away. "See you," he said, without turning around.

Sharpe nodded, then slowly came to his feet and walked over to Mario, who handed him the whistle. The boys were right in the middle of a play and Sharpe blew the whistle loudly. All of them stopped, mystification on their faces.

"That," said Sharpe, "is for what I *didn't* see."

Tibbs was heading back downtown to talk to Kenner about the necklace, but he couldn't get that fire escape out of his mind. Eventually he turned the car around and drove back to the Bayview Apartments. At the floor above Joy's apartment he knocked on the door. A minute later a man with tinted glasses and a mustache answered the door.

Tibbs flashed his badge and said, "Lieutenant Tibbs. Mind if I ask you a few questions?"

"Is this about Joy?"

"Yes."

At that the man opened the door all the way and let Tibbs in. "Rice Weedon," he said. "I own the building."

Weedon was wearing khaki slacks and a blue dress shirt. A navy jacket was hanging across the back of a dining room chair. The place

was expensively decorated, Oriental rugs, teak furniture, an antique desk and what-not. But otherwise, it was the same size and layout as the apartment below.

"We were all pretty shocked about Joy's death. Are you getting anywhere with the investigation?"

"It's coming along," said Tibbs, making a show of looking around he place. "I'd like to know who was paying Joy's rent."

"Well, uh . . . I don't know offhand . . ."

Which confirmed for Tibbs that Joy didn't pay her own rent.

". . . I'd have to take a look at my files." But he didn't make a move to do anything.

"Then I guess you'd better start looking." That shifted him into gear. The guy had an edge, Tibbs thought. What kind of edge, he wasn't sure, but the guy radiated *wrong*. Tibbs had been on the force long enough sense that immediately.

Weedon was looking through a file drawer in his desk, then said, "That's strange . . ." which to Tibbs meant it wasn't strange at all. The guy was clearly putting on a show. The question was, why?

Weedon pulled open another drawer. "Now, I *know* she must have been paying, or else I'd have thrown her out. I've got nothing but first-class tenants here, fine people."

"I'm sure you have an excellent reputation to uphold," Tibbs said with a straight face. Weedon looked at him and Tibbs could feel the contempt. That was interesting, too.

Weedon finally pulled his eyes away from Tibbs' and lifted out a small Rolodex from another drawer. "I'm not seeing it in the files. Let's take a look here." He worked his way through the cards. "3-A . . . 3-A . . . Here 'tis. Well, will you look at that, clean slipped my mind." He pulled the card out of the Rolodex and grinned. "She wasn't my tenant at all, see? She was a sublet."

"Who paid the rent?"

"Garfield Realty. They stole one of my tenants and took over his lease. The girl moved in . . . she paid *them* . . . they paid *me*."

Weedon went to his desk and rummaged around, then brought back a business card and handed it to Tibbs. "Woody Garfield. Realty."

Tibbs took the card and said, "Thank you." Weedon was still eyeballing him and so he added, "You own a lot of buildings, Mr. Weedon?"

"Here and there."

"You do pretty well?"

"I scrape up a livin'."

Now Tibbs had it. It wasn't exactly the same thing, but the guy reminded him of some peckerwoods he'd had to deal with down in Georgia years back, when he'd gone there once to see his mother. The attitude was the same, not just racist, but superior. They were mostly ignorant, however. This guy had something else going on.

"From your first-class tenants?"

Weedon eyed him some more, before breaking off and flopping on the couch. "Be sure and let me know if I can be of any more help."

Tibbs tried to bite his lip, but in the end he couldn't hold it back. His hand on the doorknob, he turned around. "What is it Weedon? Who should I call first about you, the vice squad or narcotics?"

Weedon just grinned. Like those peckerwoods down South. "You can call the president if you want to, Lieutenant."

5

Tibbs thought about calling, but in the end he needed to go back to the office in person anyway in order to bring Kenner and the captain up to speed. The first thing he did there, however, was put in a call to both vice *and* narcotics to get the lowdown on Weedon—even if it was just rumors—assuming there was something there to get. Later, the real estate office was only a few minutes away, so he went after lunch and by the time he arrived it was early afternoon. The office was located in a row of funky storefronts raised up above street level with parking underneath the building.

He walked up the stairs and then into the realty office and was surprised. From the outside it barely looked like a going concern. Inside was another matter. Paintings on the walls and art gallery lighting were a stark change from the giant map of the city and rows of file cabinets he had expected. The soft beige carpet under his feet flowed under a couple of desks, a reception desk occupied by a pretty black woman, and a secretary's desk by something a little less attractive. The secretary was guarding what looked like an office door, so Tibbs skipped the receptionist and went over to her.

"Woody Garfield," he said when he reached the desk. The woman had muscular arms, shadows under her eyes, and a face that

was hard. The expensive-looking blue dress didn't do much to soften her up.

"Why do you want to see him?"

In lieu of an answer, Tibbs pulled out his badge and flashed it at her. "Just tell him I'm here."

"I'm Mr. Garfield's wife, as well as his partner."

It wasn't a question, so Tibbs didn't feel the need to respond. Eventually she slammed shut the open drawer in her desk, scowled at the receptionist, and stood up.

"You wait here," she warned him with a pointed finger, even though he hadn't moved.

Once inside the inner office, the arguing began. There was just enough substance to the door that the specifics of the argument remained garbled. For a mom-and-pop enterprise, the parents didn't seem to be getting along very well.

Tibbs walked over to a plush waiting area. He didn't sit down, but picked up a copy of *Better Homes & Gardens* and flipped through it without really looking. Then a prickle at the back of his neck caused him to look up. The secretary was making eyes at him. He wanted to smile, but was loathe to give her the wrong idea. He didn't frown, but soon she went back to her work.

When the inner office door finally opened, Mrs. Garfield jerked her chin toward the office and said, "You can see him now." It was more an order than an offer.

When Tibbs entered, it all made sense. *This* was where the file cabinets were. Where the reception area was elegance and grace, the office was all business. It wasn't run down, or anything, but it was a working office. Garfield's desk, on the other hand, was expensive and clean. The work happened at the tables across the room.

Woody Garfield's pleasantly pudgy face was twitching. He was well dressed, that was apparent, though like his wife, it didn't do much to change the fact that he was overweight and balding. His artificial hairline clearly indicated a rug. He was seated at his desk;

his wife was next to him with her arms crossed beneath her conspicuous bosom.

"I'm here about Joy Sturges, Mr. Garfield."

"I—"

"We never heard of her," said Mrs. Garfield.

Tibbs was still looking at Garfield.

"Who is she, anyway?" Mrs. Garfield continued. "What does she want with us?"

Tibbs said to Woody, "110 St. James, apartment 3-A."

"That's not us," Mrs. Garfield practically squealed. "110 belongs to that pimp, Weedon."

Tibbs tried to smile, but feared it wasn't coming across as comforting so he stopped. "You lease and sublet the apartment."

"Nonsense," Mrs. Garfield responded.

At last Woody turned his head to his wife and said, "Yes. Yes we do, dear . . . It was all part of a package deal. We took one of his tenants in March, and assumed responsibility."

"I presume," said Tibbs, "you have some sort of file . . ."

Nodding, Woody came to his feet and said, "I'll get it," and went for the door. Tibbs held up his hand and stopped him. Then he crouched down and picked some lint out of Garfield's shoe welt. He removed a small plastic bag from his coat and put the lint inside.

"What's that?" demanded Mrs. Garfield.

"Looks like lint," said Tibbs, "from a new rug."

Woody Garfield said nothing as he opened the door and stepped out into the reception area. Tibbs was amused, wondering what he was going to get out there when all the files seemed to be in the office.

"Who is this woman?" Mrs. Garfield demanded again. "What does she want?"

"Nothing," said Tibbs. "She's dead."

"Oh . . ." Then Tibbs could see the comprehension sweep over her face. "The girl in the papers!"

Tibbs heard the front door slam, and then he did smile.

“Woody!” his wife screamed into the reception area. “Come back here, damn you.” When she saw Tibbs’ face she said, “And damn you too!”

Tibbs walked over to the picture window at the end of the office and looked out as Woody Garfield took the wooden steps two at a time. Across the street he could see Weiss standing beside an unmarked car. When Woody ran out into traffic he was almost hit by a car. The horn blared and Weiss looked up. Tibbs pointed and got the okay signal as Woody climbed into a taxi. The taxi pulled out, with Weiss right behind it.

“Where’s he going?” Mrs. Garfield’s voice next to him was so soft it almost startled him.

He could only shake his head. “I have absolutely no idea.”

Tibbs walked over to the desk and picked up the phone and dialed. “This is Tibbs. Inspector Weiss is tailing a suspect. Inform Weiss and anyone else who’s following the cab not to arrest him unless he tries to leave town. He just might lead us to something.”

After hanging up the phone he turned to Mrs. Garfield. “Get your coat and purse. You’re coming with me.” Before she could protest, he added, “As a courtesy to your local police.” Then he took her arm and led her out of the office.

Weiss was waiting in the car outside a parking garage, the one Garfield had gone into after being dropped off by the cab. Sure enough, a few minutes later Garfield emerged at the exit in a brown Chevy, and drove off heading north.

Weiss picked up the handset as he pulled into traffic behind Garfield. “Inspector 71 to dispatch . . . Am following suspect . . . light brown Chevrolet, license 478 QHG, Queen, Henry, George, heading toward Geary Street.”

Tibbs had been listening to the report over the speaker in his office. Mrs. Garfield was sitting across from him. A technician came

in and Tibbs picked up the business card Weedon had given him—now in a plastic bag—off his desk and handed it to the man. "See if you can get any useable prints off this thing. If you do, put it in the casefile.

"Sturges?"

Tibbs nodded and the man left.

Kenner came in a few seconds later. "The lint matches the rug fibers, Mrs. Garfield. What do you know about all this?"

Both of them were looking at Mrs. Garfield, but she had lost all of the bluster from the office, and simply looked haunted. "Apparently nothing," she finally said without looking at them. "I don't know what he was doing with that girl."

"Mrs. Garfield," Tibbs said gently, and she turned to look at him. "We'd like your permission to send an officer to your house to get his clothes. Do you mind?"

The question seemed to snap her out of her malaise. "And what good would it do if I did?"

"Not much, I suppose. The match on the lint is enough to get a search warrant. Now, do you want to give me the key or have us break the door down."

As she rooted in her purse, pulling items out one at a time and setting them on Tibbs' desk, he and Kenner exchanged a look. Once she'd located them at the bottom, she threw the keys on the desk without comment and began to refill her purse. Kenner took the keys and left.

Out on the street the surveillance continued, as team of unmarked cars did their best to stay out ahead of Garfield while Weiss monitored his progress north. A black detective sitting in a gas station parking lot, saw Garfield go by and thumbed his radio. "Inspector Thirty-seven to headquarters—he just went past. There's Inspector

Seventy-one. It looks like he's heading for the Golden Gate. You want me to head for the bridge? Over."

Tibbs patiently listened to the communications as Mrs. Garfield twisted the handle of her purse and licked her lips.

"Hold on Thirty-seven," said the dispatcher. "Seventy-one, what do you think?"

"Doesn't seem like he's heading anywhere," came the voice of Weiss. "He keeps circling the entrance to the Presidio. I think he's a scared cookie trying to make up his mind what to do."

"Thirty-seven, that's affirmative. Head for the Golden Gate."

When Garfield finally did decide to head north on Highway 1, Weiss had a hard time keeping up with him. Sure, Reardon was out there up ahead somewhere, but it wouldn't do for Weiss to lose the tail. So he had no choice but to accelerate and try to keep up. Garfield leapt out into the left lane and passed three cars, leaving Weiss no choice but to follow suit. Then he found himself accidentally passing Garfield and had to simply proceed up ahead, hoping he wouldn't try to turn off behind him.

The speaker on Tibbs' desk crackled. "This is Seventy-one. I think I've had it. I'm pretty sure he spotted me."

"Okay, Seventy-one," said the dispatcher. "Thirty-seven, he's all yours."

"Ten-four. I'm moving out . . ."

Tibbs could see Mrs. Garfield nearing the breaking point and he moved slowly toward the door.

"I can't stand this," she said, getting quickly to her feet. "I have to go!" She was in a panic. "You're treating him like a fish on a hook!"

Tibbs was forced to grab her arms as she approached him—and they were as strong as they looked. All he said was, "Please!" and she seemed to calm down. Enough that he could get her back in her seat, anyway.

“I’m sorry, Mrs. Garfield. Can I get you anything . . . a cup of coffee?”

She looked at him a long time before she said, “No, thank you.”

Tibbs’ phone rang and he put it on speaker. “Tibbs. What is it?”

“O’Connor. There’s a hamper in the bathroom. Dirty clothes full of fiber fuzz. We think it’s like the rug there . . . the same color,”

“What kind of clothes?”

“Underwear and socks.”

Tibbs walked over to a rendering on the wall, a layout of Joy’s apartment. In the circle on the rug he wrote in “WG.”

Mrs. Garfield muttered, “Underwear . . .”

“Any blood?” Kenner said to the speaker.

“Not that I can see.”

“Bring ’em in anyway,” said Tibbs, and then hung up the phone,

Mrs. Garfield was looking at him. “Was she . . . Was she . . .”

“Whatever you’re about to say,” said Tibbs, “she was.”

She looked dazed by the whole thing. “I didn’t think . . .”

“He had it in him?” Kenner added.

Sometimes Kenner’s contempt was too much for Tibbs, but he let it go.

At the same time Woody Garfield had finally reached the toll booth at the southern end of the Golden Gate. Weiss had slowed down enough that Garfield eventually passed hm, and was able to follow him onto the bridge. Reardon was just a few cars back, and called it in.

“Inspector Thirty-seven to headquarters . . .”

Go ahead, Thirty-seven

“Suspect proceeding across bridge at normal speed . . .”

Tibbs frowned. He knew that once Garfield was across the bridge he would be in Marin County’s jurisdiction. “I gotta get down to dispatch so I can give instructions.”

“You want me to stay with her?” Kenner offered.

“No. Bring her along.”

The two headed out with Mrs. Garfield between them, and Tibbs parked her with a patrolman outside the dispatch center. The phones inside were buzzing with activity as Marden motioned them over to one of the male dispatchers. He looked about forty, with glasses and short hair. "You want them to pick him up?"

"Not on the bridge," Tibbs said. "We don't know anything about him, or what he might do."

"Seventy-one," said dispatch, "Don't move in, just stay with him."

Then Weiss came back on the air. "Seventy-one. Ten-twenty is continuing into Marin County. Has CHP been notified?"

Tibbs looked at Marden, who nodded, and the dispatcher relayed the message.

"CHP has been notified. What's the traffic like?"

"Not bad."

Tibbs produced a cigar from his inner jacket pocket and began chewing on the end. "Is Thirty-seven still following?"

The dispatcher nodded. "About ten cars behind Seventy-one."

"Better have him close on Seventy-one, but tell him not to show himself until the CHP is in position."

Reardon sped up, passing several cars now that they were off the bridge. He could see Weiss up ahead and maneuvered to get in behind him. He recognized one CHP unmarked car as it entered the onramp and assumed there were probably more out there. Just as he thought it, a marked highway patrol car cruised by him on the left and he grinned.

Weiss wasn't quite so happy. After the patrol car shot by on the left, Garfield pulled out immediately and drafted in behind it. That forced Weiss out into the passing lane as well, and made him even more conspicuous. Then he actually saw Garfield crane his neck around and look behind at him. He hit the steering wheel with the heel of his hand and thumbed the radio. "I think ten-twenty's spotted me again."

"Are you sure?" said dispatch.

At that very second, Garfield suddenly wrenched his car into the grassy median and nearly flipped it over, threading the vehicle through a small space only blocked by netting. Tires squealed as other cars on the road hit their breaks, and horns began blaring. Cars on the other side of the road were equally chaotic when Garfield rudely entered the roadway unannounced.

Weiss had to suppress a chuckle. "Yeah," he said. "I'm sure."

The move had been too sudden for Weiss to be able to follow him. It was up to Reardon, now, if it was even possible.

Inside Reardon's car, he'd had plenty of lead time. He reached for his radio. "He's doubled back across the divider! I can't follow him without causing a pile-up!"

Marden was already dialing CHP and handed the phone to Tibbs when he'd reached them.

"South! . . . Yes, he's heading south. See if you can get a roadblock set up before he gets to the bridge. I want to end this thing now . . . Okay, we're depending on you!"

When he hung up the phone Tibbs listened with dismay to all the regular radio chatter, ". . . Northern four—ten eight . . . Central five, investigating a two-eleven at 7144 Robertson . . . Central four, is the man badly injured . . ."

"Get those cars off the air!" Tibbs shouted.

"Code thirty-three in effect," said the dispatcher. "Code thirty-three in effect . . ."

Weiss took the next offramp, and saw Reardon right on his tail. On the overpass he saw a CHP car turn onto the south onramp just ahead of him. He stuck his magnetic light on the roof of the car and turned on his siren as he hit the freeway. The CHP car followed suit. It was time Woody knew they were on to him, and to herd him right toward the roadblock.

"Seventy-one heading south," he said into the radio. "Ten-twenty not in sight. One CHP car ahead. Lights and sirens . . ."

"Thirty-seven, following Seventy-one . . ."

Weiss and the CHP car's lights had traffic heading for the shoulders. Another patrol car joined them at the next onramp, and they were able to goose the cars up to a good clip now that they didn't have to weave in and out of traffic.

Meanwhile two CHP cars up near the entrance to the bridge had slowed traffic to a crawl—and it was backing up fast.

Tibbs felt, more than heard, Mrs. Garfield push her way into the room and begin yelling, "You're killing him!"

He turned and saw the officer grab her and drag her back through the door, then tuned her out.

"Any way to patch CHP in on the loudspeaker?"

"Not this fast." said the dispatcher.

Tibbs spoke into the telephone again, "He should be there any second . . . Yeah, tan Chevy. Whatever you do, don't let him through."

At last Weiss could see Garfield's car ahead. And he didn't have much more road to go. He could also see the roadblock up ahead, about a mile before the entrance to the bridge. Weiss couldn't see that Garfield had much of a choice at this point.

Then, unbelievably, Garfield pulled to the shoulder and kept up the chase, dirt and gravel spewing out behind the Chevy. *Where the hell does he think he's going?* thought Weiss, as he thumbed the radio. "He's hit the bottleneck . . ."

Weiss and Reardon slowed, along with the other CHP cars, and watched as Woody Garfield reached the roadblock and wrenched the car to the left, into the median, where it rolled over a couple of times and then burst into flames . . .

Tibbs, with Kenner and Mrs. Garfield, were back in his office when the phone rang and Tibbs picked it up. He listened for a few seconds and then set the receiver back in the cradle.

“Bruises and superficial burns, Mrs. Garfield. They’ll have him here in a couple of hours. He wants to call his lawyer.”

Mrs. Garfield, her sympathy apparently all used up, said, “It better be a divorce lawyer.”

MT-16

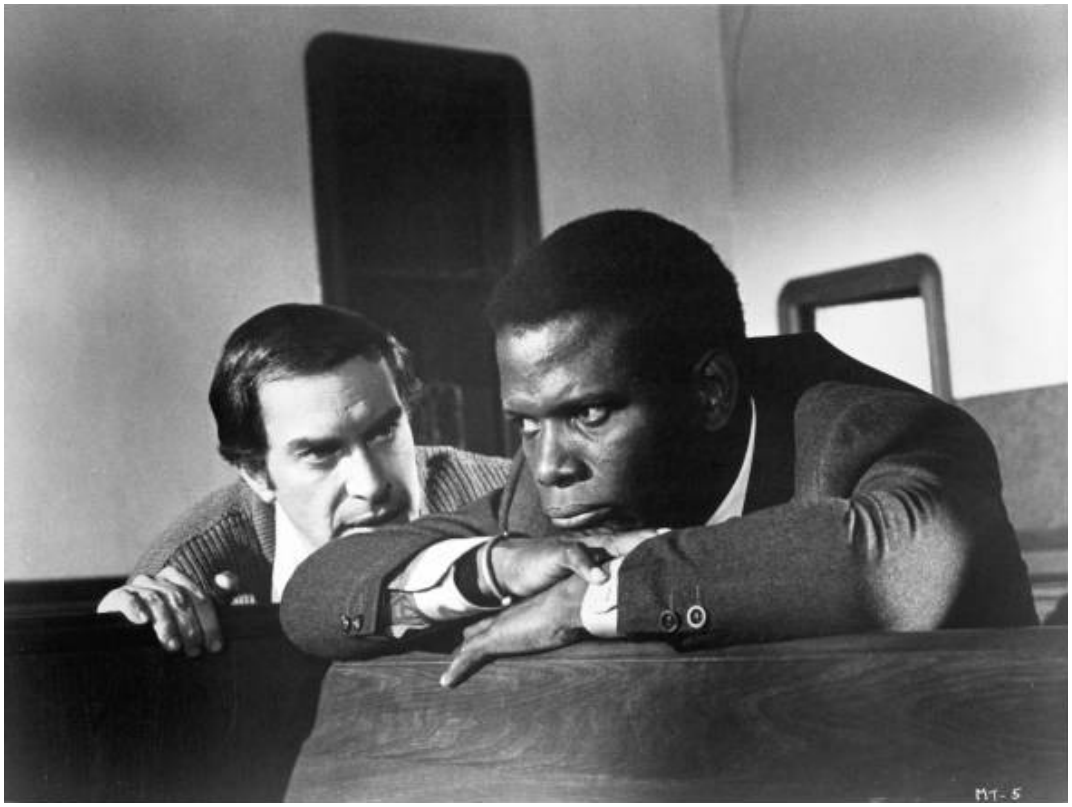
MT-17

M.T.-8

MT-9

NG MEN'S

MT-13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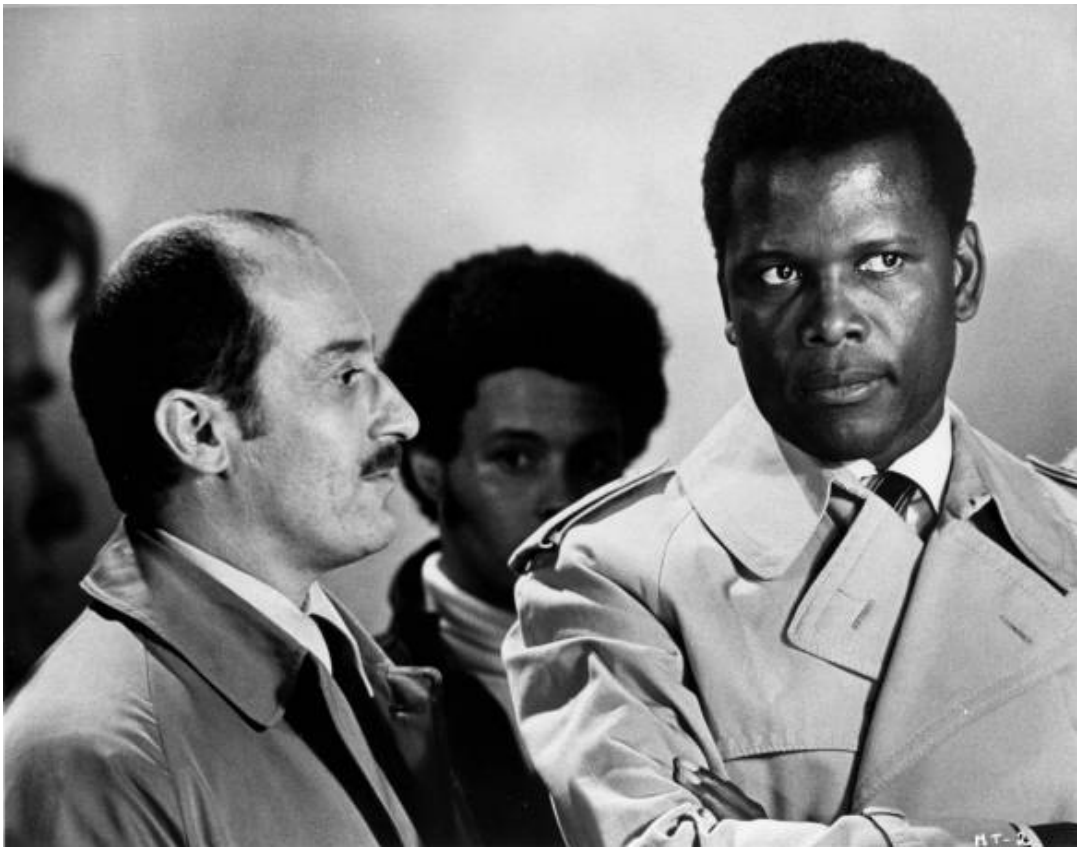

6

A campaign worker pulled a stack of fliers from the mimeograph machine and walked them over to the pool table. All around him work in the rectory was proceeding apace. Typing and stuffing envelopes at one table, two phones being worked at another. Logan Sharpe was writing checks to pay the bills at a card table in the corner. Sitting in front of him was a newspaper reporter. A small press, sure, but it was publicity of any kind.

". . . but you have to admit that the establishment—"

"*You* can call them that," Sharpe said, pointing his pen and the young woman taking down notes, "but don't put words in my mouth when you're quoting me. 'The Establishment.' What does that mean, anyway? It's a word that's been used and misused until it's meaningless."

"But you can't deny that the opponents of Proposition 4 tend to . . . fall into a certain category . . . the wealthy, the privileged, the vested interests . . ."

"I don't, but likewise you can't sit there and say that every single one of them feel that way." She nodded her head slightly. "We're all individuals, and this movement recognizes that. We're after a broad base of support—from individuals—and we don't intend to alienate anybody by using loose labels."

Tibbs had been watching this little sermon from the corner of the room. He had entered unobserved by Sharpe, and figured he'd let him finish the interview. He wandered over to the lockers and put a hand on one of them. Sharpe had happily given them all of the clothes he'd had upstairs . . . but hadn't mentioned the locker.

"You certainly can't depend on support from the city government. For one thing, you want control of the building codes—"

"Un, uh. That's not what I said. We want the *enforcement* of building codes."

"And the police commissioner and law and order element seem convinced that you want control of the police as well."

"Only to increase police efficiency, not to reduce it. More emphasis on crime prevention, more on the cop as a friendly face in the community, not as something to be feared."

That last line, considering the circumstances, annoyed Tibbs and he stepped out where Sharpe could see him. When their eyes men, Sharpe nodded cheerfully.

"How would you summarize your efforts?"

"We simply want what we're supposed to have—a government by consent of the governed. We've been swallowed up by sheer bigness, with a city council that doesn't even know who we are. Multiple, small city halls, neighborhood city halls, we believe are the answer."

"Okay. Thank you."

"You're welcome."

Tibbs slowly drifted over as she gathered up her things, and heard her say to Sharpe, "As a private citizen, I wish you luck."

"A dollar's worth?"

The woman's smile was priceless, as she dug in her purse for a dollar and left it on the table.

As Tibbs approached the table, Sharpe said, "Hi, Virge. You want some coffee?"

"I'm fine. I thought you'd like to know we have another suspect."

"Oh?"

"Name's Garfield, Woody Garfield. Mean anything to you?"

"No, never heard of him."

"Did Joy ever mention him?"

"Never."

Tibbs nodded. "Just thought I'd ask." Then he turned to leave.

Sharpe pushed himself out of the chair. "Wait, Virge. I appreciate this," he said, coming up beside him. "Real friendship is a miracle. It can't be forced. It's there or it isn't."

"But we all use friends," said Tibbs, "in different ways. I look for sparks, to light me up. I use good minds—like yours—to sharpen mine."

"You don't mean that."

Tibbs had to concentrate to keep from smiling. "I even rate my friends from one to ten—the number of seconds he'd hesitate if it were him or me . . . "

Sharpe looked horrified.

". . . And I'm lucky. I have lots of *good* friends—three twos and a four."

Tibbs turned and headed for the door. Sharpe had changed. There was a time when he could tell when he was being teased. But that didn't necessarily mean anything. He was under a lot of pressure, even if he was innocent. Still . . .

Marden was pacing the office when Tibbs returned.

"There you are. I thought you were going to miss it."

"I knew I had some time. And I couldn't sit around here waiting."

Mrs. Garfield had now been joined by a sharp-faced lawyer in horn-rims by the name of Bickel. The two were sitting on the edge

of their chairs while the captain continued to pace. A stenographer sat at the other end of the office, and Tibbs leaned against the wall by the door.

A few minutes later Kenner entered the office with Woody Garfield, Dr. Paul trailing behind. Garfield had bandages on his neck, ears, and on both hands. His hairpiece was also slightly askew. Mrs. Garfield stood and mouthed Woody's name, but he wouldn't look at her. She sank back in her seat as Woody took the vacant chair in the center of the room.

Marden raised his eyebrows at the stenographer and she nodded. "Now then, Mr. Garfield, your lawyer—Mr. Bickel—is present. A lawyer of your own choice, right?" Woody still couldn't look anyone in the eye and simply nodded. "Let the record show that Mr. Garfield has nodded in the affirmative. And you are making this statement willingly?" Again, Woody nodded.

"Listen," Bickel said, making a show of earning his money. "Can't you see my client is in shock. He needs to be in a hospital."

Tibbs saw Kenner roll his eyes.

"Dr. Paul here says he is fit to be questioned. Let the record show we have advised you of your right to remain silent. Anything you say can, and will, be used against you in a court of—"

"Cut the crap," said Bickel, "and ask your questions."

"Yes, sir. I'm getting to that."

Then Bickel looked at Mrs. Garfield and said, "What's she doing here?"

"Because she asked me," Tibbs responded. "And the law doesn't say she has to be excluded."

Bickel glared at him for a second, then said, "Okay, ask your questions."

"Mr. Garfield. Did you know Joy Sturges?"

Woody nodded.

Marden nodded to the stenographer. Woody finally looked up at his wife.

"And you were paying the rent on the flat?"

Another nod.

"If you could please answer for the record."

"Yes."

"How did you happen to meet her?"

Woody cleared his throat, then glanced at his wife before answering. "The tenant in that apartment, he wanted to move to one of our buildings. So I called Weedon. He said, okay, if we took over his lease. I offered him half up front and he said no, but I could have it furnished. I said what did that mean? He laughed. He said come over and get it . . ." Woody looked down at his shoes as his wife bored holes in him with her eyes.

"And?" said Marden derisively.

"I did."

Tibbs could see Marden's exasperation starting to get the better of him. "Did what?"

Wood threw up his bandaged hands. "I went . . . to see her. It was her."

"Who? Please be specific."

"Joy."

Tibbs had heard enough and turned to Dr. Paul. "Doc, unbandage one of his hands, please."

Bickel finally chimed in. "What the hell for?"

"We just want to be sure they're bandaged properly. You can't object to that."

Bickel looked to Marden, but it was clear the captain didn't know what was going on, either.

As Paul began removing the bandage, Woody said, "What's this about?"

"It won't hurt you."

Paul cut through the bandage lengthwise, and peeled back the gauze and tape, revealing his ointment-smeared hand. Both Paul and Tibbs examined it closely.

Tibbs smiled at Marden. "Couldn't be shorter if he bit 'em."

"What *is* this," Woody demanded.

"I think you better clue me in, too," said Marden.

"Remember the autopsy report?"

"Some, but not all. I don't remember this mumbo-jumbo, anyway."

Woody turned to Tibbs. "If you're talking about my fingernails, they cut 'em before they put the bandages—"

"He always keeps 'em long," Mrs. Garfield chimed in, "pearly, Don Juan style . . ."

The information troubled Tibbs and he went to the phone on Marden's desk, picked up the handset and dialed. "Get me police receiving—"

Marden looked over at Kenner, who just shrugged.

"A prisoner—" Tibbs said into the phone. "Woody Garfield—with burnt hands, just now. Did they cut his fingernails?"

Now Woody eagerly defended himself. "I always wear 'em long. Always. You can check with my manicurist. She's at the Palace—you can check. Her name's Jean . . ."

Mrs. Garfield turned surly again. "And how do you pay *her*?"

The bad news was like a sledge hammer to Tibbs. He hadn't been expecting that. It didn't make sense. A high-speed chase is what he would expect from a murder suspect, not someone whose only crime was infidelity. "Thanks," he said, and hung up the phone. He turned back to the rest of the room and said, "They were long and they trimmed them." To Paul he said, "Put the bandages back on."

Paul took out some adhesive tape from his pocket and began rebandaging Woody's hand.

Tibbs looked at Woody and said, "When he's through, you're free to go."

"Huh?" Woody was confused.

Tibbs looked at Mrs. Garfield and said, "You're free to go."

Bickel came to his feet. “Now look here, don’t play games with me—”

“We’re dropping the murder charge. You’ll have to deal with the highway patrol, reckless endangerment, traffic infractions and the like. But we’re done with you here.”

“Thank you,” said Mrs. Garfield.

A half hour after the Garfield’s and their lawyer had left, the rest of the group was reviewing the slides with Marden in his office. On the wall Kenner had located the slide that showed the bruises on the victim’s throat.

“You can see here,” Dr. Paul was saying “six finger marks. There was pressure enough to cause deep bruising, but there’s not a cut or abrasion—not even a slight penetration of the skin surface.”

Tibbs put the light back on.

“You’re right,” said Marden. “That couldn’t have been done with long nails.”

“Then why the hell did that guy run for it?” Kenner was still mystified.

Tibbs provided an answer. “Maybe he was scared of his wife more than he was of us.”

Paul and Kenner laughed. Marden was looking at Tibbs, and the lieutenant knew why. “What about Logan Sharpe’s nails?”

“They’re short,” answered Tibbs, unable to share in the levity. “Always have been.”

7

Tibbs was angry. All the way home he was angry. When Garfield made a run for it, he'd been delighted. And when Doc had taken the bandage off his hands and he'd seen the short nails, the weight of the world had lifted from his shoulders. Momentarily. The call to the medics, however, brought everything back to Logan, and Tibbs hated what that meant. They didn't really have another suspect.

At least the garage door was up. Valerie did that for him when she knew he was on the way home. Tibbs pulled his Oldsmobile into the garage and tried to shake off the frustration as he climbed out of the car and shut the garage door. Then Ginger met him at the garden gate, and immediately he felt better. She launched herself up against the side of the garage—all by herself—and shouted, "Look at me, Daddy!"

Virgil squatted down and began counting the seconds on his watch. Once he approached twenty, he was duly impressed. Finally Ginger tumbled over and he gave her a hug. "That's my girl! You'll get there."

"I'm going to try again," she said, as she made another attempt.

Through the garden gate Tibbs could see Valerie replanting some flowers in a pot. She was bending over, turned away from him,

and the sight was glorious. The gate was open and he walked up to her and couldn't resist giving her a pat on the bottom.

"Virge!" she said in an admonishing tone—though not from prudishness—as she stood up. Then she spied Ginger next to the garage. "There's a time and place . . ."

Tibbs simply wrapped her up in his arms and held her close. Then he looked into her eyes and grinned. "You know, I read somewhere, a famous psychologist says if your kids see you give your wife a pat on the fanny—*and* she shows she likes it—then the kids get a wholesome attitude toward sex."

Valerie's eyes narrowed, but she grinned back. "Oh, so it's all for Ginger's benefit, is that it?"

Tibbs kissed her and Valerie gripped him tighter. "Who else?"

"Well then," she said. "Since you're in such fatherly mood, you might fix the curtain rod in Andy's room—"

He kissed her again. "I just might."

Valerie's eyes narrowed again, this time without the smile. She seemed to sense his mood.

"Consider it done," he said, but before he could move away she held him by the arm.

"Virge . . . ?"

He sighed. "There are a few new developments, but I don't know how important they are yet."

He turned and headed down the terrace toward the toolshed at the bottom of the garden near the garage. Tibbs was thinking of those developments as he reached the shed and pulled open the door. Then his heart sank.

Andy was sitting there next to a blond kid from the neighborhood —Steve, if Tibbs remembered correctly—quietly smoking what looked like a cigarette. In the sour mood he had brought home with him Tibbs wanted to scream and rant, wave his arms and perhaps remove his belt and whip Andy until he couldn't sit down for a few

days. But remarkably, his anger seemed to have drained completely. It was suddenly all too much.

Steve's face had turned ashen and he looked away from Tibbs in the cool dimness. Shame, he thought, that was the proper response. Andy, on the other hand, his eyes wide, showed no such emotion. He was obviously unsure of what Tibbs' reaction would be, but he wasn't ashamed of what he'd done. Then he released the smoke he'd been holding in his mouth. "Hi, Dad."

Tibbs reached over and took the cigarette from Andy's fingers and sniffed the end, relieved that it was only tobacco. And of course Andy decided to be insulted by this.

"Oh, Dad! I wouldn't do that!"

Tibbs only stared hard at Andy until Steve couldn't stand the tension any longer.

"Uh, I think maybe it's dinner time."

"Sure, Steve," Tibbs said evenly. "You run along now."

And Steve did.

Tibbs reached past Andy and took a screwdriver from a pegboard and handed it to him. Then he collected a brace and bit, several small toggle bolts and handed them to his son as well. "Andrew, please take these up to your bedroom, will you?"

Tibbs didn't wait for an answer and headed back up the terrace to the house.

When he opened the door to Andy's bedroom Tibbs found his son sitting placidly on the edge of his bed. His eyes widened when he saw what was in his father's hands. Tibbs cleared away some room on the floor with his feet and sat down in a chair with clothing draped over the back, then set a bottle of bourbon and a box of cigars along with a couple of glasses on a cluttered toy chest.

Tibbs leaned back in the chair, trying not to wince at the general disaster of the boy's room, toys and clothes strewn everywhere. He

flipped open the cigar box and removed one, took a cutter from his pocket and carefully snipped the end before handing it to Andy. The boy looked at him suspiciously but took the cigar. He clipped another for himself, then struck a match and rotated the cigar in his mouth while he lit the end. Then he struck another match and held it out to Andy, and boy repeated what he'd seen his father just do.

Tibbs leaned back and crossed his legs, then took a healthy puff before exhaling up to the ceiling. "If you're going to do it, do it properly, and make sure you enjoy it."

Andy looked at the cigar in his hand and Tibbs waved at him to take another puff. He did, and with a worried look on his face said, "Do I have to inhale this thing?"

"No, but keep puffing. And when you hold it, keep the butt down so it doesn't get too wet. Look." He demonstrated and Andy followed suit.

After a minute or so Tibbs pushed himself up and went to the window with the broken curtain rod. A few seconds later he turned back to the room. He sighed and saw that Andy was just staring at him. "Keep puffing," he ordered, and Andy obeyed. "I don't understand how you live like this, everything such a stupid mess. Why don't you ever straighten it out?" Andy was staring at him again. "Keep puffing, I told you." Andy's eyes were beginning to water and Tibbs had to suppress a grin.

"I understand Steve is first in your class again. Do you enjoy being second best all the time?"

"The kids hate him, and nobody hates me . . . He works hard, but he worries all the time."

Tibbs couldn't even comprehend the life of complacency his son had evidently embraced. In answer Tibbs said, "Puff."

He turned back toward the window and said, "You're too big to swing on curtain rods." After wedging the cigar in the corner of his mouth he reached for the screwdriver and began removing the dangling brackets from the plaster. "Now I have to practically rebuild

the house. These screws won't hold any more." He turned to Andy, who was simply staring at him. "Puff!

"You know, no one ever taught me how to do this. No one ever showed me how to be a *good* father. Half the time I feel like I'm playing at it, pretending." He puffed hard on his cigar and continued, shaking his head. "A house like this, and you don't even notice it. A good school, it's lost on you. Maybe we ought to send you away somewhere, someplace fancy where they'll make you toe the line. Maybe a military school on the east coast."

For the first time Andy actually looked worried, and Tibbs was secretly pleased.

"Why?" the boy asked.

"To teach you some discipline. To teach you some appreciation. You have opportunity, and you don't even know it. When opportunity comes along you grab it. Any school you want, you can have it. The best there is. They're actually looking for you, you slob—who hits his sister." Tibbs tossed screwdriver on the bed and sat down again, twisting the top off of the bourbon and pouring out a couple of short glasses.

"You know, less than ten years and you're on your own. The schools are through, the Army's through, your mother and me, we'll be through. Then you'll have to take care of yourself, mister. Ever think of that one? Then what are you gonna do? What are you gonna be? Hm?"

He handed one of the glassed to Andy.

"Well, that depends."

"On what?"

"On you."

Tibbs looked at him for a hard few seconds, not sure he wanted to hear the answer. "How?"

"Well, if you don't have any money, I'll be a bum. But if you're rich, I'll be a playboy." Satisfied with himself, Andy looked down at the glass in his hand, but he didn't take a drink.

Tibbs did. In fact, he drained his glass and poured another shot. Once again he'd hit a dead end with his son. What could he do with an attitude like that? He closed his eyes and leaned back in the chair. Then he looked back and Andy and said, "Go on, drink up. You've got it all figured out."

Andy took a small sip, then coughed violently. Tibbs ignored it and took another puff of his cigar. When Andy finally stopped, he said, "Puff!" Tibbs noticed that the glimmer in his eyes was gone, and had been replaced with concern.

"You know, there's so much I'd like to tell you, about the world, about the way it really is out there. But I guess that isn't possible. I need you to try and understand what's going on. Try to do something useful . . . like cleaning up this room. Do you follow me? Can you understand what I'm telling you?"

"Sure," Andy said, with the complete confidence of someone who has absolutely no idea what's ahead of him. "You want me to clean my room, and read books . . . and don't hit my sister."

It definitely wasn't what Tibbs was trying to tell him, but if he could do at least that, it would be a start. He held out his glass toward his son, and Andy tentatively did the same. Tibbs drained his glass and then motioned it toward Andy. "Go ahead . . . Bottom's up."

Andy emptied his glass, shuddered, coughed again, and a pained and helpless look on his face was followed by him jumping off the bed and bolting to the bathroom.

Tibbs followed him and looked on as he threw up into the toilet. He rinsed out his glass in the sink and filled it with a little water. "Here," he said, holding it out to Andy. When he drank it he shuddered again, but looked a little better. "You okay?"

"Yeah, thanks."

It was then Tibbs noticed the bathroom was just as cluttered as the rest of his room. Andy set the glass down and Tibbs said, "Come on, help me get this curtain rod back up before dinner."

* * *

Later that night Valerie snuggled up to Tibbs in bed. "How'd it go with Andy? His room smells like a humidor."

"Ah, I tried something, but I never seem to get anywhere with that kid. Half of me wants to beat some sense into him, like my old man tried to do with me—"

"Virgil!"

". . . But I just don't have it in me. That's not my idea of what a father should be. And I've had enough beatings to last a lifetime."

"Well," she said, rubbing his chest. "There's still time. He's young yet."

"Yeah, that's my hope, too."

"Ginger sure seems to have your drive."

"I'm glad. For her, not for me, not for us. And that's why I want Andy to . . . figure something out, for *his* sake, not for mine.

Valerie pulled herself halfway up his chest and she and Tibbs kissed for a long time. He was hyper conscious of her naked body next to his, and he wondered absentmindedly if he had the energy to go again. But then she put her hands on his cheeks and said, "It'll all work out. Just don't give up on him. Whatever happens, he needs to know you care, that you're there for him. Get some sleep and we'll see what happens tomorrow."

Valerie rolled over and Tibbs nestled himself in behind her. That was the last thing he wanted, to face tomorrow, but it had nothing to do with Andy.

8

The first thing Tibbs did Sunday morning was drive over to the church—without the rest of the family. Mercifully, Valerie hadn't even asked about it. She knew he was investigating Sharpe and apparently intended to stay out of his way. The lockers in the rectory had been bothering him ever since he'd seen them the day before. The place was busy as ever, and he walked slowly through without even being noticed.

One of the female workers slammed down the phone and said to the room, "Baldy, who drives the campaign truck . . . just been picked up for possession of pot."

"Ten to one, he was framed," said the Asian guy, while another male voice chimed in, "I've just been waitin' for the fuzz to pull somethin' like this."

Tibbs wandered over to the lockers while the conversation continued.

"Who's gonna replace him?"

"You need a special license, you know, like a truck driver."

"Hell no, that's when it's for pay. And you ain't gonna get paid."

"Why you lookin' at me?"

"Bud," said the woman, "Can you at least go over and bail him out?"

Tibbs tuned out the conversation when he reached the lockers. On the front of one of them was a strip of athletic tape with the words, *Coach, and What Have You*, written on it. He opened the locker and looked at the clutter of athletic clothes and equipment. He fished through until he found a pair of slacks and, rummaging further, what he was really looking for: sneakers. Tibbs picked up the sneakers and looked at the souls, then lifted out the slacks as well and closed the locker. On the way out he heard a voice behind him.

"Hey, who was that walkin' off with the reverend's pants?"

"Obviously a *real close* friend of the reverend's. Any other stupid questions?"

Back at the lab Tibbs hadn't even taken the time to remove his raincoat. The lab tech seemed annoyed at the intrusion but Tibbs wasn't about to trust the chain of evidence on this one. The slacks were going to take some time, so he filled out the requisite forms and handed them over. The sneakers he was going to do himself.

Tibbs was looking at the bottom of the soles through a large microscope, and with a pair of tweezers, removed two small slivers of red glass and set them in an empty Petrie dish.

"You wanna tell me whose sneakers those are?" asked the tech.

Tibbs was busy moving the dish over to the smaller, more powerful microscope. "Uh . . . I don't . . . think so. You got a slide?"

The tech handed him a clean glass slide with a round recessed center and said, "Is it the same guy who belongs to those pants?"

Tibbs looked up from his work and glared at him until the tech threw his hands up in front of him and said, "All right. No more questions."

Tibbs placed a flat glass slide over the top and fit the whole thing under the lens. He felt as if he had been kicked in the stomach while he examined the glass and compared it with what had been found in Joy Sturgis's apartment. The two matched, which meant that Logan

had been there *after* her death—at the very least—not just before as he had claimed.

Kenner came in at that moment, the irritation plain on his face. "Well, I've been looking all over for you. What's this all about?" Kenner walked over next to him and picked up the Petrie dish, then set it down and picked up the clearly marked evidence bag. "This is the red glass from the carpet. What the hell is going on here? This isn't your own private case, you know. My name's on it in big block letters!"

Tibbs looked up at him, weary, and said, "Will you stop talking like a policeman?"

"I happen to be one," Kenner shot back. "Are you?"

Picking up the Petrie dish and handing it to Kenner, Tibbs said, "Glass, from the soul of one of Logan's sneakers . . . It matches."

The two looked at each other for a few seconds and Kenner said, "Well, praise the Lord." Then, as he looked at Tibb's face, "You weren't gonna tell me about it . . ."

Containing his anger, Tibbs shook his head. He picked up the sneakers and headed out of the lab, with Kenner in hot pursuit. "Hey, Virgil, I didn't mean anything by that, but you can't let personal feelings interfere when you're doin' a job—"

"Save it, will you Herb?" he said, forcing a smile. "I can think my way through that one."

As they walked down the hall together, Kenner said, "So what are you thinking?"

"Well, the lab checked the clothes and shoes we took from his room, right? No blood and no carpet lint."

"Wasn't important. He admitted he was there on Sunday."

Tibbs was nodding. "Okay, so today I think about the locker, find his sneakers, and they have glass in them. And it could only get there *after* the murder."

"Sure. Glass on the floor could get a little scratchy the way she did business—all over the place."

"So," said Tibbs, pretty sure he knew what answer he was going to get. "What would you do?"

Kenner shrugged, "Haul him in."

Tibbs was shaking his head. "And then all hell breaks loose. *Cops railroad leader of Home Rule movement*. The battle line will be drawn. It'll be the gung-ho militants marching in the streets, pro and con—"

Kenner took Tibbs by the upper arm and turned him to a stop in the hallway. "Look, Virgil, I'm a half-ass liberal myself, but Home Rule's even too far out for me. I don't want to be bossed around by a bunch of amateurs. So don't expect me to stick my neck out for Logan Sharpe or anything he stands for."

"I know. I know. But there's something else. He had no motive that we know of. There could be other explanations for that glass that we haven't even thought of. So how can you be so sure he did it?"

Kenner didn't have an answer and so Tibbs continued on into the coffee room.

"Look, Virgil, for what it's worth, I think he did it. But there's something you should know about, which is why I was looking for you. That print that was 'too good to be true?' on the statue. . . ?"

"Yeah?"

"It belongs to Mealie Williamson, the handyman."

Tibbs walked with Kenner the rest of the way to his office, sipping on his coffee, and trying not to be too hopeful. He finally took off his coat and hung it on the stand behind his desk while Kenner flopped down on the small couch near the door.

"How did you get a match on the prints? Does he have a record?"

"Yeah," Kenner said, "Two minor felonies—one for pandering. But nothing recent."

Tibbs sighed as he sat in his chair. “That statue was so clean otherwise, chances are it was wiped on purpose. Williamson could have picked it up after the killer left. He admitted he was the one who found her. Have you talked to him about this yet?”

“Well, he lives in the basement, but he wasn’t there. He goes on a bat now and then. We’ll pick him up.”

Tibbs took another sip of his coffee. “What about the guy who owns the place, Weedon?”

“His prints are on that business card you gave us. They match some on a window latch in her apartment, but what the hell? He owns the joint.”

“He got a record?”

“No . . . but he’s got some very expensive lawyers.”

Tibbs patted his hands on the top of his desk. “You know what, Herb?”

“No. What, Virgil?”

“I’m going home to dinner.”

Valerie Tibbs stood at the open door of Andy’s room, fuming. “I don’t want to have to tell you again, Andy!”

“Yeah!” Ginger, chimed in, which wasn’t helping the situation. “Mommy told you to pick it up, and you have to do what Mommy says!”

But before Valerie could pull Ginger back, Andy took a quick step forward and grabbed his sister by the arm, giving it a vicious twist.

“Andy!” Valerie practically screamed, while Ginger ran crying to the protection of her mother. “Keep your hands off of her!” But Andy only stood and glared at her.

Valerie had had enough. She took Ginger into the hall, and slammed Andy’s door for good measure. As the two were headed up the stairs, who should come in the front door but Virgil.

Ginger was obviously upset and he asked, “What happened?”

“Andy hit me!”

“Perfect,” Virgil said, and Valerie could see the disappointment in his eyes. “That’s just great.”

Ginger ran to him and she let her go. She was busy anyway, and Valerie went up to the kitchen to finish what she’d been doing before the interruption. She was at the stove browning some hamburger when Virgil came in with Ginger. He walked over slowly and kissed her on the cheek. But she was so angry she was practically shaking, and when she turned to him she shouted, “I don’t want to, and you can’t make me!”

The invective slammed Tibbs as if it had been a physical blow, and he immediately stepped back, wondering what he could have done to deserve it.

Valerie was turned to him, spatula in hand, while the meat sizzled on the stove behind her. The pink apron she was wearing was so incongruous with her mood that he didn’t know what to think.

“That’s what he said,” and she went back to stirring the meat. “That’s what he said to me.”

And then Tibbs finally understood. The relief so overwhelmed him that he couldn’t help but laugh.

“Don’t you laugh at me,” she said, and Tibbs quickly stopped.

“I’m not. I thought you were mad at *me* for a second.”

“Well . . . maybe I am . . . a little.”

That wasn’t good. “What happened?”

“She made a guitar out of her Leggo . . .” Valerie began, and Tibbs could see some of the anger dissipate. “And when she showed it to him he knocked it out of her hands and tore it apart, threw the pieces all over the place. Ginny told me about it, and I asked him to pick it up, that’s all. When Ginny told him he had to do what I said, he took her arm and twisted it.”

Tibbs looked over at his daughter. "Ginny," he said gently. "Why'd you go into his room? You know he doesn't like that."

"Don't you dare blame this on her."

"I'm not."

"I thought he would like it, Daddy. He likes the guitar."

Tibbs patted her on the shoulder. "I know you did. It's okay."

"You're some father," Valerie said, but without the heat from a minute ago, so Tibbs knew she wasn't being accusatory. "You're never here most of the time. You can't control him when you are. Why don't you stay home and control your son—since you can't solve the murder—and you're late for dinner as usual."

That was interesting, and it made him realize the investigation of Logan was weighing on her as much as it was him.

Tibbs walked over and put a hand on her shoulder while she worked. He could sense the fear and frustration behind the anger now.

"I'm sorry, Val . . ."

Valerie looked up at him and he thought she might cry. "Go make him pick it up," she said softly, "if you can. Go and make him." Then she turned back to the stove.

Tibbs hated this. *If it wasn't for Andy—* And then he checked himself. It wouldn't do to think that way. He trudged down the stairs and when he opened the door Andy jumped off his bed and cowered in the corner of the room.

"She told you to slug me!"

The room was still a mess, just as it had been the day before, but now there was Leggo strewn all over as well.

"No," Tibbs said. "But if I do, I don't think she'll be unhappy about it."

Tibbs walked gingerly to the bed, trying not to crush the Leggo blocks beneath his shoes. Surprisingly, he wasn't really angry, but more mystified by the young man. Sensing his mood, Andy drifted closer.

"She's always on my back about cleaning my room."

"There's an easy way to stop that, you know."

Andy didn't have an answer for that, and Tibbs continued. "You shouldn't have hit your sister."

"I can't stand her," he said, drifting closer to his father. "I told her not to come in my room. And she doesn't do anything except stand on her stupid head."

Tibbs cocked his head slightly and pointed a finger. "That shows determination, something I wish you had a little more of. I'm proud of her. She doesn't have your coordination, or athletic ability, and yet still she tries. She's learned to live with what she has and try to better it. What have you learned to live with?"

Bolder now, Andy stepped in front of his father. "An uncoordinated sister."

Tibbs shook his head and pointed to the floor. "I want you to pick this up, as a personal favor to me. Okay?"

Andy nodded. "Sure."

"Good." But when Andy made no move, Tibbs asked, "When?"

He shrugged. "I don't know."

Tibbs sighed. "Look, man, I'm trying to keep the peace in this house, and you're not making it easy. I want you to pick this up, and I want you to do it *now*." The emphasis on the last word was light, but it was there.

"Now you're on my back too! I wish everyone would stop bugging me—"

The slap to Andy's face was almost as much of a surprise to Tibbs as it was to his son. He certainly hadn't planned on it. He'd never hit him before, and he didn't much like the way it felt now. When Andy recovered from the shock, he made a move to bolt, but Tibbs was on his feet in a second and grabbed him by the arm. Andy tried to squirm away, but Tibbs held fast.

"You hit me!"

"You made me hit you."

"That's what you *wanted* to do! It's not because *she* told you to!"

Tibbs smiled, and almost laughed. Still standing over him, he said, "This is supposed to be good for you, you know, having a father and all. Hell, if it weren't for me slapping you, you know what you'd be? Sullen and rebellious." Andy just glared at him.

"Now, pick it up. Please. Or I'll have to hit you again."

Andy clenched his jaw and stared defiantly.

So Tibbs slapped him again, not hard, but it wasn't nothing. "I said," in a measured voice, "pick it up."

Nothing.

Three more slaps in rapid succession. Andy's eyes were glistening, and he wiped his nose with the back of his hand.

Maybe I am my father's son, thought Tibbs. *What else are you going to do if you can't control your kid? Is that what went through my father's head?*

His father had been a cook during the war, and he always seemed to be embarrassed by it, if not downright humiliated. And it was ironic, considering the only time his father ever went into the kitchen was to get a beer out of the fridge. Tibbs never liked his father much, and he supposed the feeling was mutual. Tibbs hated life in Georgia, and wanted to get away as soon as possible. He hated the way his people talked, and was so determined not to talk like them that he studied the voices he heard on the television. He hated the way his friends spent their time, so he read books instead. And his father hated all of it. So he beat him. What the hell did Andy have to rebel against? Maybe it was the very idea of control itself.

"Andrew, please," he tried again. "Just pick it up."

"I don't care if you hit me again. It hurts so much now it can't hurt any more. I don't care if you hit me—"

Another slap.

The tears had finally begun to leak from Andy's eyes and Tibbs sat down heavily on the bed, pulling Andy gently toward him. He

didn't resist. Tibbs felt him trembling as he held him tight, and stared off into space as he wondered how the hell he was going to resolve any of this.

"You're not perfect, son, and I don't expect you to be." Andy's breath hitched against Tibbs' shoulder. "But I can't forgive your behavior."

At that Andy pulled away, the shock in his face worse than when Tibbs had slapped him. "You made me cry!" he shouted, and darted back to the corner of the room.

Tibbs wanted to protest, but to what end? There was nothing more to say, and he pushed himself to his feet and walked to the door. "Don't bother coming up for dinner until this is all cleaned up." Without waiting for an answer he shut the door behind him.

Valerie and Ginger were waiting for him in the hallway. That was all he needed. Tibbs barely looked at them and trudged upstairs to the kitchen without comment. The two followed him, and when he sat at the table, Ginger took her usual spot there as well. His wife looked at him with questioning eyes, but he made no effort to communicate anything back to her.

Valerie dished up a plate and set it in front of him, then laid a hand on his shoulder. "Virgil?"

"Don't . . ." he said, and she quickly removed her hand. ". . . talk about it." Then he looked up at her with sad eyes.

She put her hand back on his shoulder and bent over, kissing him on the cheek. And as she turned away, Tibbs patted her gently on the fanny.

9

"Where the hell have you been?" Rice Weedon shouted into the phone.

"They're after me. I . . . I didn't know what else to do."

Mealie Williamson, on the other end of the line, was apparently in a panic. *What the hell?*

Annoyed, Weedon flicked the ash of his cigarette at an ashtray and missed, but he didn't have time to worry about it. On the couch opposite the phone sat Puff, a beautiful Negro girl wearing a see-through mini-frock with nothing on underneath. But Weedon didn't have time for any more of that right now, either.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir . . . yes, sir."

Weedon heard the slosh of a bottle on the other end, and figured Mealie was probably plastered as well as scared. He ran his free hand through his hair and waited for Mealie to finish drinking and tell him what was going on.

"Who'd be askin' for me but a cop? I ain't got no money, and I don't owe none."

Meanwhile Puff walked over and picked up the ashtray, following Weedon's cigarette around as he paced.

"Who tipped you off?"

Another swig from the unseen bottle. "You know me, Mr. Weedon, I always phone in. I never gone long I don't phone. Nellie on the switchboard tell me. Now why they lookin' for me, Mr. Weedon?

Indeed, that was the question. Of course, Mealie could identify Sharpe leaving the building that night, but nobody else knew that except Weedon. "I'm damned if I know," he said, and when he turned around suddenly Puff was in front of him holding the ashtray. So he stubbed out the cigarette that he hadn't smoked since picking up the phone, and waved Puff away.

The real question was why they hadn't arrested Sharpe yet. What was going on there? Weedon knew the cops had been over to the church, more than once his contact there had informed him. What were they waiting for? Who was protecting Sharpe?

After another slosh of the bottle on the other end of the line, suddenly Weedon thought about Mealie. "Mealie, did you *touch* anything when you were in Joy's apartment?"

Mealie was silent on the other end and Weedon dropped the receiver to his side and rubbed his face. When he put it back up to his ear he said, "Mealie . . . ?"

"Jesus . . . Jesus . . . I pick up that little statue."

Shit! "You damned fool, Mealie! . . . Now listen, don't come back here. I'm going to give you an address. Write it down."

"I don't have nothin' to write with."

"Fine, fine, then just listen. You need to get this through your thick skull and remember."

Weedon went to his Rolodex and gave Mealie the address of a vacant apartment in one of his commercial buildings. Hopefully there was no one squatting there already. He read the address three or four times to the old lush and waited until he could repeat it back to him.

"Now just go there and wait until I get in touch with you." Weedon hung up without an answer, then plopped down on the couch.

He wanted a cigarette, but couldn't see them anywhere and so he just sat.

This was bad. Sure, Mealie would be able to identify Sharpe, but the cops would want to know why he hadn't come forward sooner. And who knows what the old Negro had rattling around in his brain. As far as Weedon was concerned, the old boy was part of the background, like wallpaper. There was no telling what he might have seen—and might blab to the police under interrogation. It wasn't worth the risk, which is why he'd paid him off in the first place. The silver lining was, if the charges against Sharpe weren't going to stick, it would give the cops another suspect, especially if they couldn't find him.

Weedon looked around the apartment again. He needed a goddamn cigarette and finally pushed himself up off the couch. But before he could make a move, a loud knock at the door nearly made him jump. Then he saw Puff peek out from the bedroom and said, "Get back in there," but she didn't budge.

Another knock. "Coming," he shouted. He buttoned his smoking jacket and brushed back his hair with his hand before unlocking and opening the door.

Now he really was scared. It was that goddamn nig— uh, police detective.

After dinner Tibbs had phoned the station and told dispatch to contact Sergeant Weiss and have him meet him there. He wanted to nail down Mealie Williamson, get a statement, figure out if this was a red herring—which he assumed it was—or something more substantial. They took the unmarked Impala and drove most of the way in silence, except when Weiss told him they hadn't located Mealie yet.

Their first stop was the building on St. James to talk to the landlord, Weedon. Tibbs also didn't mind having a white face along

to ease the tension. He didn't like Weedon, and having Weiss there might keep things from escalating. The look on Weedon's face when he opened the door almost made it worth it.

"Well, well. Always an honor, Lieutenant. Always an honor." When Weedon clearly felt the presence of the woman behind him, he scowled briefly, and then made introductions. "Lieutenant Tibbs, this is Puff."

She was wearing a short negligee that left nothing to the imagination. When Tibbs looked over at Weiss he was all but drooling. "As you say, always an honor. Puff, Mr. Weedon, this is Sergeant Weiss." She nodded, but didn't take her eyes off of Tibbs.

"Which is it—Army, Navy, or Air Force?"

"Homicide," Tibbs said, walking into the room with Weiss trailing behind."

"How about a drink, Lieutenant?" asked Weedon, as he moved over to a small folding bar. "Sixteen-year-old bourbon?" he said, holding up a decanter. "Twelve-ninety-five a bottle."

"Sure," said Tibbs. "Soda."

Weiss gave Tibbs a funny look and said, "I'll take mine straight."

This seemed to annoy Weedon, which was interesting. Fawning over the black detective and treating the white one like he was unwelcome.

While Weedon poured a couple of glasses, Puff sidled up to Tibbs and said, "I bet you're not fuzzy fuzz, are you?"

Weedon forced out a laugh as he handed over the drinks. "Puff is the most amusing little chick this side of the morgue."

Weiss knocked back his bourbon and set the empty glass on the end table. Tibbs was content to hold his in his hand.

Puff gave a sideways glance at Weedon and said, "I love him . . . even though he beats me."

This time Weedon's laugh sounded more like choking. He pulled her aside and Tibbs heard him say under his breath, "Why don't you go into the bedroom now?"

"Sure," she said, but stayed right where she was.

Tibbs could see Weiss was going to be useless as long as Puff was in the room.

"So, Lieutenant," Weedon said, clapping his hands, "what can I do for you?"

"Where's Mealie Williamson?"

A cloud flitted across his face before he was able to reaffix his mask of hospitality. "You know, I was asking myself that very question just before you knocked. Haven't seen Mealie since yesterday. In fact, I was thinking of calling you boys and making a missing persons report, but yesterday was payday, so . . ." Weedon shrugged as if that explained everything.

Tibbs could read him like a book. It was obvious he was hiding something so he simply stared at him, and Weedon added nervously, "The trouble with this country is overemployment."

"I can think of others," Puff said, placing her hand on the one Tibbs was using to hold his drink. "Would you like me to freshen that up for you?"

"No thanks, Puff. You're in apartment 4-C aren't you?"

"Right down the hall." But then she turned to Weedon. "I thought the 12th of the month was payday."

Weedon nodded. "I held it up. Penalty for taking off the last time."

"I suppose you have the check stub handy?" Tibbs asked.

"No. Cash is all Mealie understands."

"But of course you pay the withholding and Social Security for him."

His irritation was beginning to seep through the hospitality. "My bookkeeper handles those things. Why the sudden interest in Mealie?"

"What's your interest in hiding him out?" said Tibbs, and before the answer he added, "We found your fingerprints in her apartment, Weedon."

Puff slapped him lightly on the shoulder. "Shame on you."

Weedon shrugged her off, now clearly annoyed. "You can find my fingerprints all over this building."

Puff nodded. "He's a *very* friendly landlord."

"What if you were there that night and Mealie knows it? There's a natural conclusion to be drawn from that."

"No offense, Lieutenant, but I care very little about what you conclude."

Tibbs looked down at his drink and finally took a sip. He looked to Weiss, who only had eyes for Puff. Then Tibbs turned to the girl. "You latched on to the right fella, Puff. He's big. Owns three firetraps over on Potrero Hill. Building inspectors never seem to bother him, though. Nobody bothers him."

Puff turned to Weedon. "He doesn't love you, honey. Not even with that twelve-ninety-five taste in his mouth. I wonder why?"

Weedon was still fuming beneath his apparent nonchalance, but Tibbs didn't care. It was time to kick over a few rocks to see what crawled out.

Tibbs set his drink down. "About all I can do is inconvenience you a little—like putting Puff away for thirty days."

"Me?" she squeaked. "What did I ever do?"

"Sorry, Puff. I'll send you some books."

"You wouldn't do that!"

"Sure I would."

Tibbs was still talking to Puff, but his gaze never left Weedon. "The vice squad was all set to run you in—you and the girl in 2-G—when this thing broke. We asked them to hold off."

Puff looked back and forth, helplessly, between the two men. "Only me and Jane? How about Joy?"

"She was more careful." Still looking at Weedon. "Or he was more careful *for* her."

Tibbs nodded to Weiss and they both headed for the door. Tibbs turned as he grasped the knob. "I want to know where Mealie is. Think about it, Weedon—you have about five minutes."

Puff rushed over to the door as Tibbs opened it. "Lieutenant, you wouldn't," she said, all sweetness and light. "You really wouldn't, would you?"

Tibbs and Weiss walked out into the hall. But when Tibbs turned back, he could see the anxious look on Puff's face. Then she leaned out into the hall and mouthed the words, her voice barely audible: "438 Garrison Street." And the door closed on her pleading eyes.

Puff turned to Weedon as soon as the door closed and shrieked, "You dirty bastard! You'll send me books, too, I suppose."

Weedon sighed. "Relax, would you? It was a bluff. Ten to one you never hear any more about it."

"A bluff, huh? And you were more careful about Joy? I suppose that was a bluff, too?"

"Honey, I don't even know what he was talking about."

Weedon walked over and poured himself a drink, then Puff grabbed the decanter from his hand and stomped off to the bedroom. Weedon took a sip and said to himself, "Why are they playing it so cozy with the preacher? That's what's bugging *me*."

Back in the car Tibbs picked up the radio. "Seventy-one to headquarters."

"Go ahead, Seventy-one."

"We're on our way to 438 Garrison Street to question a suspect."

"438 Garrison?"

"That's right."

After a brief pause, “There’s been a disturbance reported in that area. Two juveniles in a stolen car. The crowd interfered with the arresting officer, I think. I don’t have a clear report.”

“Can I get some backup?”

After a few more seconds of silence, the dispatcher came back on. “I have Seventy-four in the area. Where do you want them?”

“Around back of the building.”

“You got it. Take it easy.”

When they arrived, it was much worse than the dispatcher had reported. People in the street were shouting and patrol car lights were rolling while uniformed officers made arrests and dragged their suspects through the mob. To make matters worse, a local camera crew from KQED was filming the whole thing from the top of a news truck. It was a madhouse.

The crowd, while mostly black, contained plenty of Latinos, Asians, and a sprinkling of whites. They tipped over a parked car while medics brought out a wounded officer from inside a building and loaded him into an ambulance. Tibbs and Weiss drove by the scene, looking for the address. That’s when Tibbs spotted Logan Sharpe and Freddie running through the crowd.

Weiss chimed in, “What’s your preacher think he’s gonna do against all this?”

Tibbs glared at him and said, “What are *we* gonna do?”

Uniformed officers directed Tibbs through the riot, and he parked the car half a block away, in front of the address Puff had given him. It was a poolhall, with rooms above. A loud crash behind him made Tibbs wince as the violence continued to escalate. Angry people were putting hands on the patrolmen, and breaking windows in the ground floor of the building. A lot of the young people in the crowd were clearly posing for the cameras, and had nothing to do with whatever the complaint the rest of the crowd had.

The two detectives watched Sharpe and Freddie paw their way through the mob while officers handcuffed more of the rioters. When

the two reached an impasse, Freddie yelled, "Cool it, you guys! Cool it! Let the coach through!"

"Aw, Jesus," said Weiss. "Look at that."

Tibbs had been looking behind them, and now he turned his gaze to the front of the pool hall. Weiss was pointing at another group of people, separate from the rioters. But these faces were all white, and none of them were shouting. They had no interest in the TV cameras, and though no weapons were visible, it was clear they were carrying something beneath their coats.

Tibbs reached for the handle of the car but Weiss grabbed his arm. "I think we better wait. Let the uniforms get a better handle on things."

"I don't know, Les . . ."

"We don't have riot gear, Lieutenant, or the kind of weapons we need for this. We gotta wait."

"What about *those* guys?" Tibbs pointed to the whites.

"If they make a move, then we'll get out and try to stop them. Might actually be the best thing, considering the circumstances. Getting out now might just provoke them."

Tibbs wasn't sure he was convinced, but he stayed in the car.

Back behind them Freddie was trying to force himself through the crowd to clear a path for Sharpe. "Stop! Stop!" Sharpe was yelling at the top of his voice. "Be quiet and listen to me!"

"Lay off, Coach," responded a voice from the crowd. "You just got here!" Another shouted, "Whose side are you on!?" And still another yelled, "He's a pig like the rest of 'em!"

Sharpe finally leapt up into the back of an empty pickup and whistled loudly to get the crowd's attention. "Will you listen to me, please!? What are you doing!?"

Then another voice in the crowd yelled, "Give the coach a break. Come on, guys!" and things quieted a bit.

"You're breaking windows, and stealing television sets! Listen to me, please!" Tibbs rolled down his window to better hear what

Sharpe was saying. "I don't know what happened here, but none of this is worth it! This isn't the way to make things better!"

The crowd, for some reason, had decided to listen to him.

"Looks like your boy's got their attention," Weiss said.

"For the moment." Then Tibbs pointed to the whites in front of the pool hall. "These cool cats are a different story," and opened his car door.

"What do you want *me* to do?" which meant to Tibbs that he wasn't coming along.

"Get the car out of here if things turn ugly." The crowd, it seemed, was already losing patience with Sharpe, and the noise began to rise. Then Tibbs grinned. "Don't fall asleep."

"That'll be the day."

He heard Weiss on the radio while he took his bearings.

"Seventy-one to Seventy-four."

"Seventy-four here."

"You watching the back?"

"Affirmative."

Tibbs headed across the street toward the white crowd with purpose, hoping he wouldn't need Weiss to come to his rescue.

Halfway across the street one of the boys spotted him and said, "Hey, don't I know you? Sure, sure." And to the rest of the gang, "Here's one that's scared to wear the monkey suit."

Tibbs made eye contact briefly and then walked past them into the pool hall. The lighted entrance led down a long set of stairs to the basement of the building. Along with the dozen or so pool tables in use, there was a large bar serving plenty of patrons. Die-hard drinkers in here, Tibbs surmised, preferring the sauce to the excitement outside.

"Hi, Charlie," Tibbs said to the black manager behind the counter.

Charlie merely nodded.

"I'm looking for Mealie Williamson. And before you try to warn him, we're watching the back, too."

"Mealie?" he said, as if he barely knew the man. "I think he went out to see the fun."

"Did he . . . ?"

Charlie didn't respond.

"I guess I'll just have to wait here till he comes back."

"It's a free country," Charlie answered. "So they say."

The noise in the pool hall, subdued when he first arrived, had dimmed to a whisper as Tibbs looked around and felt as if every single face was looking back at him. He spied a back door and began to walk slowly toward it, past the only empty pool table in the place.

Opening the door he found himself in a deserted toilet. He checked the stalls one at a time, until he reached another door at the end of the room. Slowly, he pushed the door open, and it wasn't until it creaked that the three men looked up at him. They were sitting at a table. Two were white, playing cards. The third was an elderly black man with a two-day stubble of white whiskers on his chin. He was eating a sandwich from a paper plate with a half-pint of bourbon at his elbow.

"Mealie," said Tibbs. It wasn't a question. "You need to come along with me."

Tibbs reached slowly into his pocket and removed his badge, flashing it to the other two. Mealie put a hand out toward the bottle and Tibbs said, "Un, uh. You're not gonna need that. Let's go."

Mealie finally stood up, licking his lips and looking at the bottle. The two were halfway to the door when one of the white guys jumped up from the table and pulled a switchblade. But Tibbs had pulled his service revolver at nearly the same moment and had it out, his arm extended at the threat, daring the man to make another move. With his free hand Tibbs pushed Mealie toward the door, and once they were through, he holstered his weapon. What he was not expecting was the group of people there to greet him as he came through the

poolhall door. Tibbs looked over at Charlie, who stared at him hard for a second and then went back to his work.

After a brief pause, Tibbs moved Mealie forward, and was suddenly attacked from his right. Again, his training kicked in and muscle memory shot his arm out in a murderous chop to his assailant's neck, sending him to the floor on his knees. It was dead silent. Nobody moved. The only sounds were the injured man's soft moan and Tibbs' breathing. Tibbs then took Mealie gently by the elbow and led him toward the stairs. He stopped at the front counter and said, "Thanks." But Charlie only looked at him with a frozen stare of contempt.

Slowly, Tibbs helped Mealie up the stairs and through the front door. Tibbs was surprised again by the crowd that met him once outside, including a TV camera and a reporter with a microphone. He looked across the street but Weiss could only shrug. The protest down the street had subsided, but apparently word had spread that there was more excitement to be had at the pool hall.

Mealie froze in place, unable to move.

"Come on, Mealie. Let's go."

"What . . . what are you doin' to me?"

"Shut up, Mealie," said Tibbs, and got him moving again. "This has nothin' to do with you."

"What you got on me!" he shouted, enough for the reporter to hear and run over with a microphone. "You ain't got nothin' on me!"

The reporter stuck his microphone at Mealie and said, "Sir, what are you being arrested for?"

"Get out of here," Tibbs yelled, but it did no good.

"I ain't gonna let you railroad me," Mealie was crying out. "What you been tellin' these people? *I ain't killed nobody*!! Them fingerprints don't mean nothin'." And the camera was catching it all.

"Why don't you talk to the reverend? I was there—I seen him!"

"Reverend who?" the reporter responded.

"Sharpe! Reverend Sharpe!"

As quickly as Mealie had said the words, the lights swiveled to land on Logan Sharpe, who Tibbs hadn't noticed was giving interviews to newspaper reporters nearby. He looked startled and squinted into the brightness while the TV anchor ran toward him. Meanwhile, Weiss met the two in the middle of the street and helped hustle Mealie into the backseat of the car.

"Talk to the Reverend Sharpe, you dummies!" Mealie was still yelling. "Talk to the Reverend Sharpe!"

"Get us out of here," Tibbs said to Weiss.

"Gladly."

Regrettably, Tibbs had misjudged the situation. When he told Mealie he wouldn't need the bourbon, he'd clearly been wrong. The old guy was inconsolable, and looked to be on the verge of a complete breakdown. A quick stop at a liquor store, and Tibbs emerged with a small paper bag. Back in the car he handed it across the seat to Mealie, who grabbed on to it like a drowning swimmer to a lifebuoy. A few blocks later, he finally stopped blubbering, but Weiss and Tibbs still had more shopping to do.

Back at the station house there were reporters everywhere. Tibbs and Weiss brought Mealie in and Weiss took him to the desk sergeant to await questioning. Then Tibbs headed down to Marden's office to tell him. When he went inside he saw that Kenner was there too. The captain turned on Tibbs and said, "You better get out there and tell them something."

Tibbs looked back at him. "That's *your* job."

"Oh, no," Marden said, apparently fighting back a smile. "You wanted this case and you got it. That means all of it. I already told them you'd be out there to talk to them in a few minutes."

Tibbs turned to Kenner, who said, "Don't look at me. My name's only on the file as a formality."

"Yeah," said Tibbs. "In big block letters, as I recall." Then he headed for his office to drop off his raincoat before going out to placate the media.

At Weedon's apartment the TV was tuned to a special report on one of the local networks. Puff was sitting on the couch—fully clothed—watching the set, while Weedon himself was torn between the news and the two men in suits that bulged at the hip playing cards at the dining room table. A glass in his hand, Weedon stopped when he saw a reporter with Tibbs.

"We're here with Lieutenant Virgil Tibbs of the Homicide Detail. Lieutenant, do you consider this witness a major break in the Sturgis murder case?"

Tibbs was serious but relaxed in front of the camera. "I don't think so. While we hadn't known that there was a witness, we already had Reverend Sharpe's statement. He volunteered this information the day after the murder."

"Why wasn't Reverend Sharpe brought in for questioning? Didn't you consider his presence there that night a development that warranted detaining him?"

"The focus isn't on Reverend Sharpe. Our focus is on gathering information that will help us make a determination as to who might be responsible for the murder. To that end, we're questioning Mr. Williamson, just as we questioned Reverend Sharpe and other people who have information regarding the case."

"Does the fact that you didn't bring Reverend Sharpe in for questioning have anything to do with his work on Proposition 4?"

"I don't think so. We questioned him in the field and felt that was sufficient."

"But you wouldn't deny that political factors might make it seem that way?"

"I wouldn't deny it, but we won't be influenced by it."

Puff stood up and chuckled. "He's a smooth cat, all right." Then she walked over to the bar. "Anyone else want a jolt of twelve-ninety-five bourbon?" But no one answered.

Weedon continued pacing behind the couch while his guys continued playing cards at the table. "That idiot Mealie. How did they find him?"

"I told you," Puff said, "he's a smooooth cat. And what do you care? He's puttin' it all on the Reverend, anyway."

Weedon looked over at his two associates and then back at her. "This isn't just about Joy . . . It never was."

Across town at the Tibbs' residence, Valerie had been watching the news all evening. Virgil had called her a couple of times, but she still worried about him. And even though the hour was late, she didn't want to take the time to put the kids to bed in case she missed anything. The reporter was now talking to Logan Sharpe.

"This must come as a real shock. You did a great job of stopping the riot, and then to have this accusation against you—"

"There was no accusation. I was there that night. The police knew about it, and I gave them a full statement. As Lieutenant Tibbs said, it was only the sudden publicity that makes it seem shocking."

The answer made sense, but Valerie couldn't help thinking that Logan still looked worried.

"Was Miss Sturgis a member of your congregation?"

Logan shook his head. "No. I never confined my work to church-goers. She expressed an interest in religion and I did what I could to help her."

"How did the police come to question you about your presence there that night?"

"Apparently it was an anonymous phone call."

"Why didn't you go to the police that night with the information?"

“Because I didn’t know what happened after I left. I didn’t find out until later that night, when Lieutenant Tibbs came to talk to me.”

“Do you think the call had anything to do with your work on Proposition 4? An attempt at a smear campaign?”

Logan’s mouth turned up in a wry smile. “I wouldn’t want to speculate, but let’s just say it wouldn’t surprise me. There are a lot of interests invested in maintaining the status quo. But I certainly don’t mind the free publicity for Proposition 4.”

When the report went back to the studio Valerie stood up and turned off the set. “He handled it well,” she said, more to herself than the children. “I thought he handled it well. It could help the vote.”

Andy said, “I wish they’d show the part again where Pop came out of that place. All those tough guys . . .”

“Yeah,” said Ginger. “It was scary . . . like a western . . .”

“Now maybe you have some idea of what your father has to do every day, the stress that he’s under. And we were all so terrible to him tonight.”

“I know Pop’s a hero and all that,” Andy admitted. “But he was still pretty mean to me.”

Then Ginger blurted out, “That’s because you’re such a son of a bitch.”

“Ginny!” Valerie yelled, and looked over to Andy, worried about what his reaction might be. Instead of anger, though, she could swear he was almost grinning, as though he had just seen his sister in a new light. In the end, she decided to let it go. “All right, everybody. Time for bed.”

10

The next morning there seemed to be a real change in the house after the tumult of the night before. Tibbs hadn't had a chance to talk to Valerie about the case when he came home because she was already asleep. The kids ate their breakfast in peace, still tired and thinking about the school day ahead on a Monday. Hmm.

At the station house the lab was already at work on the glass they had picked up the night before. Marden was afraid that the match Tibbs had made on the red glass on Sharpe's sneakers might be from something else, so he had Tibbs and Weiss go around and purchase similar glasses from stores around the neighborhood. After the Mealie incident it had seemed a good way to decompress. But now this morning, the whole thing seemed like a waste of time.

The lab tech went through the routine half a dozen times, breaking the glass from each store and comparing it to the shards found in the sneakers. Tibbs, Kenner, and Marden were gathered around the tech as he made his determination.

"You realize," he said, without looking up from the microscope, "that I can't check it now for molecular structure."

"Yes, damn it," Marden practically shouted. "We realize that."

Tibbs looked over at Kenner, who could only shrug.

"Obviously the same grade of glass," the tech continued. "Color refraction looks the same . . ." He finally looked up from the scope. "Superficially they would seem *very* similar, could even be from the same importer. This town must be littered with that glass."

"So," said Marden, "nothing to lead you to believe that the glass from the sneakers is any different?"

The tech looked at the lieutenants with some embarrassment. "Well, no . . . but that's not really the way it works—"

"That's good enough for me. I say we bring him in, damn it. I want people to know that I'm not *afraid* to, no matter who screams. I'm not afraid of the politics on this."

Tibbs sighed. "Captain, we know you've got the guts. The problem is you don't have the case. That's why I didn't bring him in yesterday. The glass isn't enough."

Marden glared at Tibbs and said, "You better not be protecting him, Virgil."

The comment stung, but Tibbs held it together, and in a measured voice responded, "You said it yourself, people are going to be screaming when we bring him in. You don't want to have to defend the division from using weak evidence as well. You don't want people questioning that. The evidence has to be beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Marden finally said through gritted teeth, "Then find some . . . fast," and turned and walked out of the lab.

Weedon was sitting with Carson and Blake at the table playing cards. Unlike the other two, who were still wearing their jackets, Weedon had removed his and sat in shirt sleeves and a leather shoulder holster while he rearranged his cards. Puff was on the couch doing her nails. A knock on the door startled him. His two men reached for their guns, but Weedon waved them off and slipped on his jacket to hide his own.

"Coming."

Puff's eyes widened, but Weedon shook his head and shrugged. When he reached the door and looked through the peephole, the words escaped his lips unbidden. "Damn it!" It was Cowley.

He opened the door where a small man in a three-piece suit and a briefcase stood waiting. Weedon grabbed him by the upper arm and pulled him inside, then took a quick look down the hallway before pushing the door closed.

"What the hell are you doing here?" Weedon demanded after the door was closed.

Cowley's eyes narrowed. "Same as always. What do you think?" Then he moved to the table and set the briefcase down.

"I phoned Miami and told them to head you off."

"They couldn't reach me," he said, and snapped the locks on the briefcase, opening it up to reveal dozens of plastic bags of heroin, already cut and weighed. "When I'm carrying, I make sure God Almighty can't reach me."

"Jesus Christ," Weedon nearly shouted. "You have to take it back!"

Then Cowley stopped what he was doing and just stared. "What's the matter with you?"

"Look, something's happened here, okay? The cops are watching me, so I have to cool it for a while."

Cowley shook his head and went back to his briefcase. "And tell Miami no deal? You take this or you'll never see another shipment again, no matter how God damned big you are" And with a glance at Weedon added, "Assuming you're still alive to take another shipment . . ."

Weedon realized he had no choice and finally said, "All right." Then he looked at Carson and said, "I want this out of here this morning, and get it to the distributors fast."

"Right."

Then back to Cowley, “But I’m taking my own sweet time getting to the bank.”

Cowley was pulling the plastic bags out of his briefcase and setting them on the table, while Blake brought in a small scale from the kitchen. The little man stopped and looked at Weedon. “I’m leaving this afternoon.”

Waving a hand at him, Weedon said, “You’ll get your money.” Then he looked at Puff, who for the first time actually looked worried.

Tibbs had nothing. Mealie hadn’t been able to tell them anything they didn’t already know. He’d gone into the apartment after the murder and picked up the statue, but it was obvious he hadn’t killed Joy. What was less obvious was why he had fled in the first place. He said he’d been scared, that the cops aways blame the Negro. Maybe. But it didn’t make sense. So Tibbs decided to go back to the beginning, Joy’s apartment, and her landlord. He wasn’t sure Weedon had anything to do with the murder, but he was hiding something, and Tibbs had an idea what it was.

After last time, he decided to leave Weiss in the alley and walked into the Bayview Apartments on his own. Tibbs made his way briskly through the lobby, turning briefly to catch the eye of the receptionist who waved at him and went back to her switchboard. Then he jogged up the stairs toward the fourth floor.

Carson took a packet of white powder off the scale and handed it to Weedon, who then opened it. He dabbed his little finger in the powder and put it on his tongue, then nodded. Carson did likewise, and nodded to Blake, who then began counting out the packets and dividing them into separate piles.

“Fifty grams for Oakland,” Weedon said to Carson, “a hundred for North Beach . . . cut the Peninsula down to sixty this time. Central was what . . . seventy last month?”

“A little less,” said Carson.

“What the hell’s the matter with that guy? Give him a hundred and a kick in the ass.”

“Right.”

Weedon was still giving instructions to Carson and Blake when the phone rang. He picked up the receiver and said, “Yeah.”

It was the receptionist: “That cop’s comin’ up to see you.”

Weedon slammed down the phone in a panic. “Tibbs! He’s on his way up!”

Puff leapt up from the couch.

“Tibbs?” said Cowley. “Who’s that?”

“That’s what I was trying to tell you. Shit!” He pointed to the table. “Get this stuff in the back room.” Then to Puff, “Get out there and stop him.” She hesitated and he screamed it again, “Get out there, or you won’t be worth two bucks to a blind man!”

Cowley glared at Weedon as Puff opened the door and went out into the hall. “You let the cops catch me with this stuff *your* life won’t be worth two cents.”

“Go, go, go!” Weedon urged as Carson and Blake carried the product and the scale to the spare bedroom in back of the apartment.

“How you gonna get me out of here?” Cowley demanded.

“Those guys never work alone. They’ll be watching the fire escape. That’s why I never keep the stuff here—”

“I’m not just gonna walk past him . . .”

Weedon ran to the door and took a peek out. He could see Puff’s back as she reached the head of the stairs, and Tibbs’ head as he loomed up in front of her.

“Weedon . . .”

"Shut up," he said in in a loud whisper. "You'll be okay in the back room." He reached for the briefcase, but Cowley snatched it off the table before he could touch it.

"Not with *my* prints on it."

Weedon ushered him to the back room with Carson and Burke, then wiped the sweat off his face and tried to calm down.

Tibbs was bounding up the last few steps when he saw Puff appear, and he knew something was up.

"Well, are you ever big on TV."

"You want an autograph?"

Puff smiled. "More than that. I was just on the way to my place. Why don't you join me for coffee . . . and stuff?"

Now Tibbs smiled. "Sorry."

"Come on. You're not on the vice squad. And I did you a favor, didn't I, telling you where Mealie was?"

Tibbs looked her over. She was arresting, even fully clothed. "Uh huh," he agreed, and then moved toward the apartment. "See you."

But Puff reached out and touched his arm. He turned back to her and she moved in closer, rubbing one hand down his lapel. "Don't act so square. I know you're not. I can tell."

She really was a beautiful woman. "What do you want with me?" he said. "Did Weedon beat you once too often?"

"It's not that. I thought cops were supposed to be observant. Haven't you spotted it yet? He's a switch hitter."

That was news, and Tibbs allowed himself to be intrigued. "With a low batting average?"

"He couldn't get into the ball park unless he owned the club." Then Puff took his lapel in her hand and pulled herself closer. "Why are we wasting time in conversation?"

Tibbs took her hand from his lapel, then lifted up her other hand and put them together in front of her. "I was thinking the same thing. See you."

Tibbs turned again, but this time Puff's words seemed to stick in her throat. "Lieutenant." As he turned, the look on her face was anything but seductive, but she quickly recovered. "Don't tell me I've been wrong about you."

Then Tibbs finally understood, and he cursed his own stupidity. Now he ran for the door and pounded on it. Without waiting for an answer he pushed it open and stepped inside. There was Weedon and another man sitting at the dining room table, playing cards.

Weedon laid down his cards and said, "Gin."

Puff had been sent out to delay him, and it had worked.

"Ah, Lieutenant. What a surprise." Weedon said, and moved to stand up.

Tibbs shot a finger toward him. "Sit tight, Weedon."

It was all Weedon could do to keep himself under control. He told Carson to leave his gun in the back room, but he still had his .38 nestled at his side.

Tibbs moved his finger and said, "Who's this?"

"Mr. Carson, a friend of mine. Naturally we call him Kit."

"Naturally."

Then Weedon thought of something. "He also happens to be my lawyer . . ."

Tibbs was staring the two of them down, walking further into the room. Weedon rubbed his face in a casual way, trying to disguise the move to wipe the sweat off his upper lip.

"You made the phone call, Weedon."

"I make lots of phone calls—"

"You made the call to Marden. Mealie ran up and told you, and you got on the horn to the station."

"If I did . . ." Weedon swallowed hard. "*If* I did, you should thank me."

Tibbs' eyes narrowed, "But you didn't want to be thanked. Why not?"

Try as he might, Weedon couldn't think of a response. The door to the back room was open a crack behind Tibbs, and through it Weedon could see Cowley with the briefcase clutched to his chest. Weedon wanted to scream at him.

Finally Tibbs said, "I want to look at your clothes," and moved toward the bedroom.

"Un, uh, Lieutenant. Not without a warrant. I'm afraid Mr. Carson would insist."

Carson nodded.

It was a bluff, but Tibbs called him on it. He reached into his jacket and pulled a folded piece of paper from the pocket. Weedon finally stood up from the table, followed by Carson, and took the paper from his hand.

Weedon stared at the writing, comprehending nothing as the black marks swam in front of his eyes and he struggled to think of some way out of this. Anything.

Tibbs snatched the paper away from him. "You've seen warrants before. You don't have to read the fine print."

"Well . . ." he struggled. "That will take some time. Mr. Carson is just my financial advisor. I'll need to call a criminal lawyer to take a look at this."

"You've been reading the wrong supreme court cases."

Weedon gradually worked his way between Tibbs and the bedroom door, with Carson making his way around the far end of the couch to back him up.

Tibbs looked back and forth between the two of them. "You gonna let me in there or not?"

"Look," Weedon said, his hands out in front of him. "I'll get the clothes for you."

"Sorry. I want to see them all."

Tibbs knew he was onto something as soon as he figured out what had gone on in the hallway. Unfortunately, he had no idea what the hell it was. Weedon was obviously hiding something. But if what Puff had said was right, he didn't really possess the kind of passion that would have made him kill Joy Sturgis in such a brutal manner. Of course, Puff could have been lying to him about that, just like she had about everything else. Tibbs spied the phone on the desk and stepped toward it, placing his hand on the receiver. And that simple movement broke everything loose.

The second Tibbs' hand was on the phone, Carson launched himself at Tibbs. Because it was his right hand on the phone, he wasn't able to get to his gun in time, and the big man hit him hard and drove him back onto the desk. *Lawyer, my ass*, Tibbs thought, as Carson fell on top of him. He felt more than saw Weedon taking off toward the back room. Carson was strong and solid, his hands like a vise around his neck, and it took all of Tibbs' strength and both of his hands to keep from being strangled. He squirmed and attempted to get some kind of leverage on the guy, but he couldn't release his hands from Carson's or he risked passing out. He wasn't able to reach for his gun without running he same risk.

Tibbs thrashed about as much as he was able, to keep Carson from getting any more leverage against him. Then he heard a bell, the ringer on the phone, make a small ping in the middle of the struggle. Tibbs strained his head around and spotted the phone on the corner of the desk, perilously close to falling off. He had one chance and decided to take it. Releasing his right hand from Carson's, he reached for the phone, was able to grasp the base and receiver together, and with all his strength, slammed it into Carson's head. It stunned him enough that he relaxed his grip on his neck, and Tibbs used the momentary respite to slam the phone into Carson's head with

even more force, and the big man finally slumped down and slid off the desk.

Tibbs pushed himself up, choking and coughing, while he pulled his piece from his belt holster. Carlson was lying on the floor, inert, and Tibbs stumbled to the back door. He tried the knob. It was locked. Then he stepped back, adrenaline coursing through his veins, and kicked with all his might next to the knob, sending the door splintering inward, his gun pointing straight ahead.

Directly in front of him was a dark-haired man, not quite as big as Carson, who immediately put his hands in the air. Off to one side was another, much smaller man in a three-piece suit who shouted, "I'm clean! I'm clean!"

"Up against the wall. Both of you."

As the two men were turning, Tibbs saw two things simultaneously, one was an open briefcase, empty, and the other was an open window. The room was situated on the corner of the building, with the closed window looking out on the fire escape, where Weiss was sitting in the alley. When Tibbs looked out the other, however, it was just in time to see Weedon on the roof jumping over a wall to an adjoining building.

"Damn it!"

Tibbs holstered his gun, stepped out on the sill, and made the twelve-foot leap onto the tarred roof below. Tibbs jumped over the wall like it was a pommel horse and saw Weedon ducking and dodging behind large ventilators while a man in coveralls was spreading tar at the far end of the roof.

"Hey," the guy said, "you aren't supposed to—"

But by then Weedon had found the access door and disappeared inside. Tibbs made for the same door, and he could see now that the maintenance worker was more afraid than angry. Once inside the darkened stairway, he could hear Weedon a floor or two below. Tibbs practically slid down the stairs in his dress shoes, struggling not to lose his balance. By the time he reached the second floor he heard a

door open one floor below him. A few seconds later at the same spot he slammed open the door and found himself in a residential parking lot, and could see Weedon running across the street.

The light was with Weedon as he crossed Stockton Street at full speed, and then headed for the stairs down to the Stockton Street Tunnel. When Tibbs reached the street, however, the traffic had already started to flow, and he had to stop cars amid a cacophony of horns to reach the same stairway. Again, Tibbs ran down the stairs as fast as he could go, all the time hoping to keep a visual on Weedon, but the twisting staircase prevented that.

When he reached the bottom of the stairs Tibbs groaned inwardly. First, the tunnel was the length of a football field, though Weedon probably wasn't in any better shape than he was. And second, he knew where Weedon was heading: Chinatown. The sidewalk in the darkened tunnel wasn't empty, and there were enough pedestrians that it was difficult to make out his quarry up ahead while running at full speed. Fortunately, Weedon was clearing a trail ahead and Tibbs was able to follow in his wake. Two rows of lights overhead were the only illumination in the middle of the tunnel, in addition to cars with their headlights on travelling in both directions.

As the end of the tunnel approached Tibbs was winded, but he had no intention of slowing down. He was only about thirty or forty yards behind now, and saw Weedon emerge from the tunnel and disappear to the left. Then Tibbs was out of the tunnel himself, in time to see Weedon climb a walkway railing and cut across a vacant lot up Sacramento Street. Tibbs followed and saw Weedon pull open a door and vanish inside a large apartment building. Despite Tibbs' labored breathing, he was gaining on Weedon, and was even more heartened by what he saw once inside.

A long, empty hallway, lit by yellow bulbs, showed Weedon in stark contrast as he hit the rear door barely twenty yards ahead. When Tibbs emerged into the alley, he couldn't see Weedon, but also saw there was only one way out, and followed him to the top of a set of

cement steps and just spied him turning right at the bottom, out toward Joice Street. This second alley actually had a fair number of people walking through it, and Tibbs had to dodge a number of them, but then so did Weedon, and when they hit Joice, Tibbs was still only about twenty yards back as the two of them crossed the street and Weedon increased his speed heading toward Clay Street.

But Tibbs had to dodge a couple of cars, and when he finally emerged onto Clay . . . Weedon was gone. He hadn't actually disappeared, however, but the street was so crowded with pedestrians, Tibbs couldn't see him at all. His only advantage is that he knew which way Weedon had turned out of the alley, and Tibbs waded into the crowd in that direction. At the intersection of Clay and Stockton, Tibbs could see Weedon hadn't gone into the street, so he turned right onto Stockton believing that was the direction he'd gone. Then the crowd gradually thinned out and Tibbs spotted him turning into a small, shopping arcade.

He flew down the stairs after Weedon, arms still pumping, determined not to lose him again. The arcade filled half of the block, and once outside, left down a long alley, they had reached Stockton once again. Weedon was running in a circle, and clearly had no other plan than to try to lose Tibbs in the maze of buildings. The two of them emerged in front of the Chinese Central High School, where uniformed teens were walking up the steps while Weedon and Tibbs raced down them. Crossing a playground full of children, Weedon jumped another low fence and headed down an underground stairway with Tibbs close on his heels.

As Tibbs emerged through the door at the bottom, he stopped cold. It was a large parking lot, full of cars. Fortunately, it was well lit, but that didn't really help him because he couldn't see Weedon at all. The guy could be hiding anywhere. Just then Tibbs heard the squeal of tires on cement echo off the walls and saw a car drive out of the garage. He nearly panicked, but there was no way it could be Weedon, so he had to assume he was still there, trapped in one sense,

as long as Tibbs was able find him. Then he smiled. He saw Weedon attempting to get through another access door, but it was locked. Weedon took off, and Tibbs followed.

While Weedon raced around looking for unlocked doors, Tibbs launched himself up on top of the cars and jumped from hoods to trunks making a direct line toward the fugitive. That's when he saw Weedon pull a pistol and Tibbs had just enough time to jump down from the car he was on before a bullet smashed through the windshield. Inwardly, he was thankful, first for not being hit, and second for now having the justification to pull his own weapon. Weedon fired two more shots that didn't seem to hit anything, and Tibbs fired one back in his direction, to let him know he wasn't the only one who was armed.

Weedon then made a break for it and Tibbs fired again, before getting to his feet and continuing the chase. Weedon ran between the cars and one of the outer walls, while Tibbs paralleled his movements behind the cars in the center of the garage. Then Tibbs heard a car door open and an engine fire, and figured Weedon had found an unlocked car and a set of keys. Tibbs quickly worked his way out toward the exit and knew he had just one chance. A white Mustang shot out from the far wall and he fired once and missed. Then he ran to the front of the car he was behind, and took aim again. This shot smashed through the passenger window, and the car swerved violently into the rear of two other parked cars and crashed to a halt.

Tibbs approached the car cautiously. He was sure he'd hit Weedon, but wasn't going to take any unnecessary risks. He couldn't see any movement behind the spiderweb of cracks in the passenger window. Jogging forward toward the back of the car, he came around to the driver's side, his revolver out in front of him, and saw Weedon leaning against the door, apparently dead. Tibbs opened the door and the dead man flopped over, arm hanging out to one side. He holstered his weapon and remembered the open briefcase in the apartment. He opened Weedon's coat to look in the pockets. They were stuffed with

plastic bags containing white powder. That was one mystery solved. Unfortunately, it was the wrong one.

11

A pair of shoes sat resting on a table next to a microscope. The technician on the microscope next to them adjusted the eyepiece, then slightly shifted the slide, and finally pulled back and reached for the phone. He dialed and waited.

Without preamble he said into the receiver, "I found a piece for comparison in one of Weedon's rubber heels. It looks like a match."

In his office, Tibbs said, "Thanks," and hung up the phone.

Marden was parked on the credenza, Kenner on the couch drinking coffee. Tibbs told them, "The glass matches."

A smile crossed Marden's face, which Tibbs didn't like. Then the chief began listing off pieces of evidence as he counted them on his fingers. "The glass matches, the lint matches, he had short fingernails, and we have a good motive. He was no good in the sack and she taunted him with it."

" . . . Maybe."

"What do you mean, 'maybe?' I've known of at least twenty homicides where that was the real motive." When Tibbs didn't respond Marden pushed himself to his feet. "You go ahead and write

your report. The press wants a statement and I'm going to give 'em one."

Tibbs just stared at him. "What're you going to give 'em?"

"Christ," Marden practically yelled, "he ran and started shooting!"

Tibbs rubbed his face with both hands. Marden was nothing if not transparent. Last night when reporters were clambering for news about Reverend Sharpe's connection to the case, he was more than happy to let Tibbs do the dirty work. But now that it was just a drug dealer, he was ready to take all the credit.

"A case is never solved until a judge says it is."

Marden looked at Kenner and then back at Tibbs. "You've been playing softball with Sharpe ever since this whole thing started. Now we practically have this drug dealer's confession and you're still not happy? What else do you want?"

"Nothing, I guess . . . Okay, we'll *consider* it solved. But I don't want it closed until I sign off on it."

Marden simply stared at him.

"Look, just give me the rest of the day to tie up the loose ends. Can you at least give me that?"

Again, Marden looked at Kenner before turning back to Tibbs. "A shooting like this, it's never easy. I know. I've been there."

Tibbs was relieved. If Marden thought it was the shooting that was weighing on him, he might give in.

Then Marden turned to Kenner on his way out. "Finish the report for him."

Kenner nodded.

At the door he said, "You can have the rest of the day. But you know what you should do with it? Go home. You need a little loving." And with that he was into the hall and gone.

Kenner watched him leave and then stood up and tossed his empty coffee cup in the wastebasket next to Tibbs' desk. "Well, well, well . . . Weedon . . ."

"Disappointed?"

Kenner shrugged. "Don't take it personally. I guess I just wanted to nail the preacher."

Tibbs pushed himself up wearily from his desk and took his raincoat off of the rack and shrugged it on.

"Do me a favor. See if you can get him to hold off on the statement, will you?"

When Tibbs was at the door Kenner asked, "Where are you going?"

"110 St. James."

"Hang on to your virginity."

"I keep trying to tell you, I don't know anything."

Puff was not happy to see Tibbs, and even more unhappy when he pushed his way into her apartment. The place was a real swinging pad, beads in the doorway, shag carpet, folk art of nudes on the walls, probably great for turning tricks. But a prostitution bust wasn't going to be a threat, not after what he'd done to Weedon.

"Can't I get it through your head," Tibbs pleaded, "he was a bad guy. All I want is a clean case."

She turned away from him to pour herself a drink. "Why isn't it clean enough for you? You killed him, after all."

"Let's get the record straight. He started the shooting."

That caused her to turn around. "And you finished it. Is that it?"

"It was kill or be killed."

Puff just shook her head at him. "You stupid bastard. You killed the wrong man. He didn't do it." Then she walked to the door and opened it. "Now will you please just get the hell out of here."

Tibbs followed her and closed the door. "That's what I'm talking about. What makes you so sure he didn't do it?"

"I was in his apartment . . . the whole night."

"And he never left it?"

"Oh, he left it all right. He went down there."

Tibbs shook his head. "Come again?"

"We'd just been grooving there in his bed. And like I told you, he wasn't young enough—or man enough—or interested enough to go downstairs and try it again."

"So why did he go?"

Puff walked over and sat on the couch.

"Tell me, why did he go?"

With a sigh. "To collect."

Tibbs was thinking this through and she must have thought he didn't understand. "She wasn't having sex with that fat slob Garfield because she was in love. He went down there to get his cut."

It was what he figured but he kept pushing, albeit with a much more subdued tone now. "She could have been holding out on him."

Puff practically rolled her eyes. "He wouldn't kill her for that. She was merchandise!"

She lit a cigarette while Tibbs pondered. He didn't like to be convinced, not by Puff, anyway, but it all made sense. He walked over to the couch and asked another question.

"Did she . . . talk about Logan Sharpe much?"

Puff hesitated a long time before she said, "Some."

"Did he ever give her anything?"

Another sigh. "Books. A lot of dull-ass books."

"Only books?"

"And a lot of talk about political and religious crap."

It wasn't until then that Tibbs finally recognized the ring on her finger and he wanted to kick himself. What the hell did this woman do to him that he lost his edge around her? He should have noticed that first thing.

After a long pause he said, "How did you get into her apartment?"

The look on her face was priceless, pure innocence. "What?"

He walked over and sat next to her, and picked up her hand. "Where did you get this ring?"

She jerked her hand free and said, "It's not worth anything."

"You sweet-talked your way past the cop at the door, didn't you?"

She didn't answer.

"Forget about prostitution. I have enough on you for obstruction to get you three years instead of thirty days. Now tell me how you got in there."

He could see she understood her position, but she never lost her anger at him. "I told him she borrowed a dress—"

"You'd take that kind of chance for a ring that wasn't worth anything? I don't buy it. That's not what you were really after . . ." He paused. "What you wanted wasn't there, was it?"

She didn't want to answer.

"It wasn't there, was it?"

"No!" she yelled, and pushed herself from the couch and went to the mantle above the fireplace. "But that's the way it is with you God damned cops. You're just as crooked as the rest of us."

Tibbs thought for a second and saw an opening, then attenuated his tone. "Maybe we have it down at headquarters."

She narrowed her eyes at him.

"You were a friend of hers. You could make a claim. What did it look like?"

He finally saw her soften, though he attributed that more to grief than any manipulation on his part. "It was on a gold chain," she finally said. "But it wasn't the chain, it was the locket I really wanted. It had a diamond right in the middle of it."

The information was like an avalanche that threatened to smother him, and it took Tibbs a few moments to gather himself before he said, almost in a whisper, "Thanks." Then he let himself out.

Tibbs climbed into the car where Weiss was waiting, and gave him instructions for their next stop. Then he picked up the radio.

"This is Lieutenant Tibbs in car seventy-one calling for Lieutenant Kenner."

After a minute or so the radio came back to life. "This is Kenner, go ahead."

"Did the old man put out that statement yet, Herb?"

"Not yet."

"Good. I'm coming in. Get all the guys together you can. We've got an awful lot of legwork to do."

Tibbs hung up the radio and then said to Weiss. I'll need you on this as well, Les."

"Yes, sir, Lieutenant," he said around a cigarette.

Back at the station Kenner had been able to round up two other homicide detectives, Reardon and O'Connor, who were willing to help out even though they were already working cases currently. Tibbs had everyone at their desks pull out a copy of the San Francisco Yellow Pages, divided everyone up by geographic areas, told them who to call and what to ask for, and the team spent the rest of the afternoon on the phones.

As dusk began to descent outside Tibbs became discouraged. They should have had something by now, and if they didn't soon, the rest of his day was going to be shot. As the clock approached six he began to doubt his own theory and contemplated just giving up. That's when O'Connor looked up from his desk and told the room, "I got it."

Tibbs jumped up and ran over to O'Connor as the detective put a finger on an advertisement and said, "They close at six, but I told him he had to stay until we could get someone over there. He's not very happy about it."

“Keep him on the line,” Tibbs said, and ran back to his desk. He called the homicide department in the Mission District, where the shop was located, and convinced one of the detectives he’d worked with before to run over to the business immediately and keep the owner there.

When he hung up the phone he said to the room, “Good work, men. I appreciate it.

Then he picked up his raincoat and Weiss asked him, “Do you want me to drive you, Lieutenant?”

“No thanks. I have to do this part by myself.”

It was rush hour, so it took Tibbs twenty minutes to get to the small jewelry shop in the Mission District, and by then it was full dark. A detective was waiting on the sidewalk in front of the shop smoking when Tibbs pulled up, and as he climbed out of his car the detective opened the door of the shop and held it for him as Tibbs went inside.

The lights were off in the store, except for where the owner waited behind the counter. The detective motioned toward him and said, “Mr. Wilson, Lieutenant Tibbs.”

The man nodded, and the detective said, “You need me to stick around?”

“Yes, but you can wait outside.” Then the detective left while Tibbs pulled out a small photograph from his jacket pocket.

“I hope this isn’t too much of an inconvenience for you.”

“No, I don’t keep regular hours. And I just happened to sell a watch while I was waiting. A dollar after six is as good as one before.”

Tibbs nodded, dreading the final piece of the puzzle falling into place. Then he handed the photo over to Wilson. He studied it for a few seconds and nodded.

“You feel pretty sure about the identification?”

"Yep."

"A small snapshot like this, taken several years ago . . . You'll have to testify, you know, and they'll try everything to confuse you."

"I know. In this business you get called into court a lot, with robberies and stuff. I don't like it much, but at the end of the day . . ." Wilson shrugged and looked at the photo again. "I recognize you in this and I recognize *him*. He's the man who called himself Gerald Adamson. If your detective hadn't been able to describe the work done, I never would have been able to make the connection." He shook the photo for emphasis. "But this is him."

"I'll need to take the evidence with me, but I won't make you come in for a statement tonight. You can do that tomorrow."

"I appreciate that, Lieutenant. Let me just get the stuff you asked for."

A minute later Tibbs emerged from the shop and held out a small plastic bag to the detective. "I'd like you to run this up to the lab at the Central Precinct, if you have the time."

The detective dropped his cigarette butt on the sidewalk and ground it with the toe of his shoe before taking the bag. "Sure. I can do that."

"Thanks for this, Pete. I really appreciate it. And make sure someone in the lab signs for it. Don't leave without a solid chain of custody."

"You got it, Lieutenant."

As the detective walked away, Tibbs stood there in front of the shop in something of a daze. Behind him he heard the door lock and the iron gates pulled down inside the windows. Of course he always suspected this, but the actual evidence struck him hard. Pedestrians passed in front of him in both directions, with little more on their minds he imagined than their evening meal. He almost envied them. But this was the job. Finally overcoming his inertia, he walked to his car to close the case.

* * *

The rich sound of the organ drifted through the nave as Logan Sharpe sat in one of the pews worrying over the vote that was to take place the following day. Freddie was in fine form, and usually when Logan went out to listen to him rehearse it had always been calm and comforting. Tonight was anything but that. If the proposition didn't pass it would be much more difficult to try again, almost prohibitively so.

"You okay?" Freddie asked.

"Just the election. I wish it was over already."

"Look, Coach, those opinion polls . . . They can be wrong. It's in the bag, I tell you. *Our* side's gonna get out and vote tomorrow. *Their* side's not."

"Some of them will, Freddie. I just wish the polls didn't show so many undecideds. That's what worries me. What makes an undecided person finally decide? Is it a mental process or a gut feeling?"

"I wish they'd lower the voting age . . ."

If they were going to lose, Logan thought, he hoped it would be by a lot. That, he could make his peace with. If they lost by a whisker, it would haunt him for a long time, and he didn't know if he could live with that.

"If we had said something different, done something different, would there be fewer undecideds? I wish I believed in divine guidance, really believed in it."

Truth be told, Logan wasn't sure *what* he believed anymore. He saw Freddie look up from the organ, and then go back to the music. Then he heard the footsteps and looked over to see Virgil Tibbs standing over him. It reminded Logan that he hadn't seen the family in church the day before, and he hoped they hadn't lost faith . . . in him.

* * *

The long walk down the center aisle of the nave pained Tibbs. He could see Logan in the front pew, seemingly talking to himself while Freddie played. When he finally reached his side, the reverend looked up at him.

"Hi," he said, breaking out into a smile. "Did you come to share the long night before the battle?"

More pain.

" . . . Not exactly."

Tibbs walked up the steps of the sanctuary to the organ, where he put a hand on the young man's shoulder. "Freddie, could you give us a couple of minutes alone?"

Freddie snapped off the power button to the organ and said, "Bet you wouldn't say that to Van Cliburn." Then he smiled.

"Thanks."

More pain.

When Freddie had disappeared behind the door to the sanctuary Tibbs turned where he stood. He had to hand it to the guy. The look on his face was one of pure innocence. It was one of the things Tibbs had always liked about him. Logan knew as much about real life as anyone could, more than most preachers, but he always took on each new day as if it was his first.

"I don't know how to ease into this. I can't. I gotta take you in, Logan."

Any other time the astonishment on Logan's face might have been enough to make him doubt . . . before today, that is . . . before he had the evidence.

Logan held his hands out and leaned back in the pew. He breathed out audibly, as if he had been punched in the gut. "I don't believe what I just heard . . . Why?"

Tibbs just wanted this to be done, to be over. He was afraid the pain would quickly turn to anger if it didn't end soon.

"Don't make me have to give you the spiel about lawyers, your rights, and all that. Just . . . come on in and let somebody else take over from here."

"Look, I can't. You know I can't talk to anyone else about this but you. Now you just tell me, and we'll clear it up."

Tibbs wanted to slap him in the face, knock some sense into him. But he swallowed the anger and held it in check. "You can't, Logan. You can't clear it up . . . Because you did it."

Finally, Tibbs could see the doubt creep into Logan's eyes. But he hung in there. "Now, you've *gotta* tell me why you think so—"

"Why I *know* so." Tibbs looked down at the collar of Logan's shirt. "You're wearing that chain around your neck."

The façade slowly dissolved from the reverend's face and he looked down at his hands. He took a deep breath and then Tibbs walked down to stand beside him.

"The night we took your clothes you weren't wearing it."

Logan looked up at Tibbs, as his hand seemed to move unconsciously to the necklace. "I don't remember. I usually wear it, but . . . well, not always."

"Like when Joy was wearing it."

At that Logan finally came to his feet and walked away from Tibbs toward the back of the nave.

"Look," Tibbs said, "let's just go, before I find myself interrogating you."

Now Logan became defensive, turned and walked past Tibbs. "Then you interrogate me, because I'm not leaving here, not before the election."

At that, Tibbs had had enough, and finally shouted. "You tore it off of her!" It stopped Logan dead in his tracks. "Or she tore it off. I think *she* tore it off. I think it would take that to provoke you enough."

Logan wheeled on him, still trying to defend himself. "Virge, that isn't even circumstantial. It's pure fantasy."

“And the broken glass in the sole of your sneakers? Glass that puts you there at the time?”

“I wondered where they’d gone. You took the sneakers. I don’t remember seeing a search warrant for my locker—”

“Forget it, Logan! Save it for your lawyer.” Tibbs took a deep breath. “You took that necklace to a jeweler—Carl Wilson, in the Mission District—to have it repaired Saturday morning. He identified you, and he can identify the new catch he put on.”

Tibbs could see the wheels turning in Logan’s head as he drew a breath to speak, but he stopped him. “For God’s sake, enough already!” Then the anger dissipated. “Don’t try to explain it here, with me. It might trip you up later.”

Logan stared at him, and so Tibbs hit him with the evidence. “The old catch was eighteen-carat gold. Jewelers don’t just throw stuff like that away—it all adds up. When it scratched her neck it left microscopic traces of blood and skin, enough to positively identify.”

Tibbs though for a second Logan was going to break down, but he took a breath and said, “All right, I—”

“No,” Tibbs cut him off. “I don’t want a statement. And I certainly don’t want it here. It’s no good without witnesses anyway.” Tibbs moved into one of the pews and eased himself down. He felt weary as he looked up into the guilty man’s eyes. “Besides . . . I don’t want to hear it.”

Now Logan’s tears began to flow, and Tibbs looked down at the floor.

“Virge . . . Virge. First she made me feel like a washout as a minister—and then a washout as a man.” Logan walked over behind Tibbs. “You can understand that, can’t you Virge? Not condone it, but understand it.”

Tibbs said nothing.

Then Logan went to his knees next to the pew. “Twenty-four hours, Virge. Until the polls close.”

Tibbs shook his head. He still couldn't look him in the eye. "I can't."

"Look, you'll be spared a trial. I'll confess. I want to confess. I've wanted to . . . God, how I've wanted to . . . Listen, Virge. What difference can twenty-four hours make?"

"I know you did it. That's the difference."

"Fifteen per cent of the voters are undecided, and the second you take me in there it's gonna be all over the newspapers and television. Think about how hard these people have worked. They're never gonna be able to get back together if we lose this, Virge."

Tibbs finally looked at him. "They wanted me to arrest you yesterday. Might have been better if I had." Then he turned his gaze back to his shoes. "Might have been enough time to play up the issue and play down the man. But I wasn't sure about you, so I didn't."

"If you did it then, you can do it again. I'm not gonna run." When Tibbs didn't respond his voice raised in a panic. "Stay glued to me, but you gotta do it, Virgil! You—"

Tibbs' head shot up and Logan flinched back as if he had been slapped.

In a measured tone Tibbs said, "I'm through playing God, Logan. Maybe by arresting you now it will swing those undecideds your way. Maybe they'll think you're a martyr. Or maybe they won't. I don't really care. How the hell do I know what they'll think? Look, I'm not wise enough to play fast and loose with the rules."

But Logan only stared at him, provoking Tibbs' anger once again. "Aw, for God's sake, Logan!" he said as he came to his feet. "Do I have to put the cuffs on you?

Logan shook his head, tears streaming down his cheeks. "Should I get my stuff?"

"No. I'll have it picked up."

Tibbs nodded his head toward the front door, and Logan began walking with Tibbs trailing behind.

At the car Tibbs opened the passenger door and slipped inside while Logan waited on the sidewalk. He picked up the radio and thumbed the mic. "Dispatch? This is Lieutenant Tibbs. I'm on my way in with Logan Sharpe. Let Marden and Kenner—"

The squeal of tires stopped Tibbs and he looked out the back window of the car just in time to see Logan step in front of a truck where the crushing impact launched him back onto the cement with a sickening thud.

Freddie came screaming out of the church and ran into the road, falling to his knees over Logan's body.

" . . . Lieutenant?" came the disembodied voice over the radio, "are you still there?"

Tibbs thumbed the mic again. "Yes," he said, his voice sounding odd to his own ears. "Cancel my previous message. I'm gonna need an ambulance . . ."

12

At the precinct house Tibbs had to take care of a few formalities. The first thing he did was check with the lab on the evidence from the jewelry shop, then he met with Marden and Kenner and explained what had happened. Back in his office he called Valerie at the house, but there was no answer. He waited around to hear from the hospital, and finally headed for the parking lot to go home. It wasn't until he had nearly reached the front door that he realized he'd left his raincoat in his office. He'd been hauling that damned thing around all weekend, and now that he was going home he didn't have it. Too tired to go back, he pushed open the door onto a group of waiting reporters and photographers, and beyond them a small group of quiet protesters. Most of Logan's congregation was no doubt at the hospital.

"How is he, Mr. Tibbs?"

"He's dead."

"It was an accident?"

Tibbs nodded.

"But he *was* in custody."

"Yes."

"You consider the case solved?"

“A case is never solved until a judge—”

Tibbs stopped and stared. At that moment the stress and angst of the past few days suddenly seemed to melt away. There in the parking lot was Valerie, holding Ginger’s hand while Andrew stood beside them.

He knew this was going to be hard for Valerie to process over the next few weeks—or longer—and he was going to be there for her every step of the way. The kids, too. She was putting on a brave face as he walked over to her. He put his arms around her and then held her hand while, miraculously, Andy came over to hold Tibbs’ free hand. He gave it a firm squeeze, and the four of them walked through the small crowd toward his car and home.

Marden was right. He could use a little love right now.

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